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ABSTRACT

This document consists of the two 2000 issues of the "Journal of Educational Relations," published twice yearly to promote student achievement through positive school-home-community relationships. The articles in the first issue include: "Behaviors of a Principal Directly Influence a School's Culture" (Douglas J. Fiore) and "Dollars for Scholars Programs Help Raise Achievement Expectations and Funds for Scholarships" (William C. Nelsen). Articles in the second issue include: "Truth in School-Community Relations: 'Fact' or 'Fiction'?" (Mel Heller); "Plug into the Internet To Keep the Community Informed" (David E. Szychlinski); "A Public Relations Calendar for the First-Year Superintendent" (Linda Tabers-Kwak); and "How to Manage Parent-Educator Relations in an Affluent Community" (Bonnie Burns). Each issue also contains a teaching or administrative case study and response, book reviews, and articles in which educators share insights regarding improvements in school-community relations. (KB)

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The Journal of Educational Relations, 2000

Albert E. Holliday, Editor

Volume 21, Numbers 1-2

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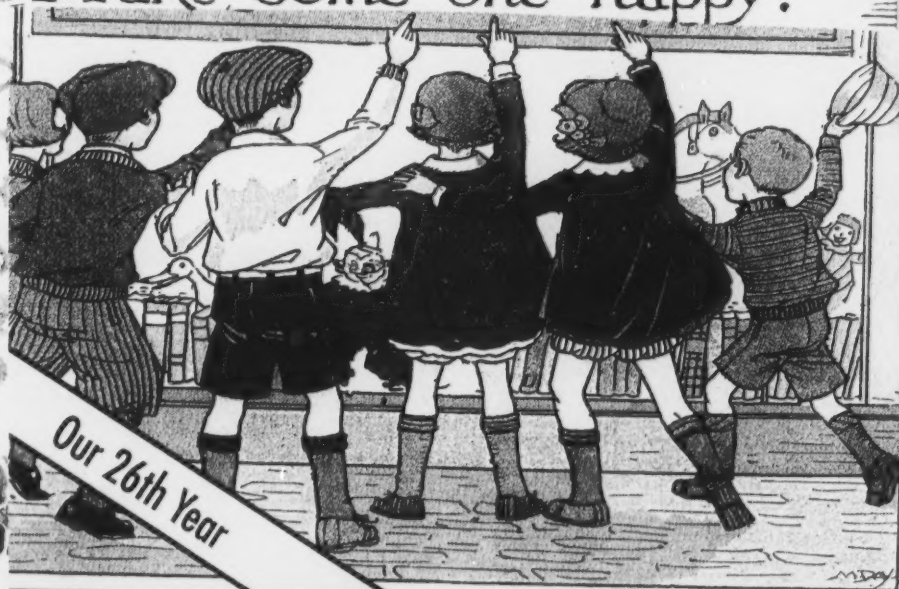


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Our 26th Year

Notes from the

School Climate, Revisited

Since we began the *Journal* in 1975, creating and maintaining a positive school climate has been an ongoing priority.

In my *Ultimate Guide to School-Community Relations* in 1994, the 8th listed process to enhance student achievement and foster staff productivity dealt with developing internal relations and climate. "A superintendent's first audience," I wrote, "that must be nurtured is the internal one. One cannot take the loyalty, interest and dedication of staff for granted even in the best of times."

Further, in 1998 M. Scott Norton wrote here that "school climate tends to either enhance or inhibit human growth and development...A healthy climate enables the kinds of growth that is needed for renewal and for keeping a school alive and vital." His focus is on interpersonal relationships and how a positive atmosphere can be created.

Now, Douglas Fiore in this edition provides insight from a different perspective. He discusses the primary role a principal has in creating a positive or negative culture. He includes survey instruments one can use to learn about their own administrative staff.

In a similar vein, Bill Banach takes readers on a journey to a community where a CEO has launched a highly competitive school academy. That official believes in creating a climate favorable to the new school with less favorable results to the existing operation. His tale has messages for educators who as yet have not made communication and community relations one of their main priorities.

We believe the mix of articles and

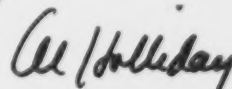
reviews in this edition will be valuable for you and your colleagues. Feel free to share your reactions and opinions, and consider sharing ideas of your own in an article here.

Welcome to a New Approach

As we start our 26th year of publishing the *Journal*, we enter a new distribution format of two editions a year rather than four. Subscribers will receive as much or more content as we have doubled the size in pages.

Note that potential guest editors are still sought—we now have two at work on timely and important issues. A guest editor is responsible for arranging four to six articles or reports covering about 30-35 of our pages. We have guidelines for those interested in serving in this role.

And subscribers are encouraged to photocopy certain articles for staff and board members. We do ask that the credit statement shown below to be attached to all copies. (Subscribers at intermediate units and higher education institutions need to contact me before distributing copies of articles.)



Albert E. Holliday
Editor-Publisher

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We feature in this issue several of Jim Simpson's cartoons. These are featured regularly in the quarterly magazine published by the Alberta Teachers' Association (11010 142 Street, Edmonton, Alberta Canada. T5N2R1).

Jim's character is Ms. Magister, a teacher who has cryptic comments about education generally and the people she encounters.

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*The exact contrary of what is
generally believed is often the
truth.*

Jean de La Bruyere

Behaviors of a Principal Directly Influence a School's Culture

By Douglas J. Fiore

A positive school culture is one in which stakeholders share common visions and beliefs that provide the foundation for the success, achievement, safety and fulfillment of students.

Substantial amounts of research exist regarding the benefits of positive school cultures and their impact on a school's overall effectiveness. Stolp¹ found that healthy and sound school cultures correlate strongly with increased student achievement and motivation, and with teacher productivity and satisfaction. This, in turn, creates a feeling of comfort among teachers and students. Feelings of comfort at school lead to productive learning environments that have a positive impact on the achievement of students². Researchers have also indicated that the healthiest school cultures are ones that build feelings of community among stakeholders³.

Additional research has identified instructional leadership as a critical fac-

tor within schools that achieve consistently high outcomes for all students⁴. It is important, therefore, to understand the relationship between principal effectiveness behaviors and school cultures. In particular, we must ascertain the extent to which the principal has an impact on the culture of a school. Specifically important to the training and development of school leaders is the extent to which the principal acts as builder and broker of positive school cultures. If the behaviors of principals affect the cultures of our schools, then leaders can be developed who recognize culture's significance in student achievement, staff motivation, and the sense of community our schools need and deserve.

The Nature of This Study

A recent study was conducted in 261 elementary schools in Illinois and Indiana to determine the relationship between principal effectiveness and

Principals—Positive or Negative?

school culture. Using data compiled from the *School Culture Survey*, which was developed by the Middle Level Leadership Center in 1998⁵, the upper third of the responding schools were considered schools with more positive cultures and the lower third were considered schools with more negative cultures. The more positive third and the more negative third were considered "outlier" groups.

Eight schools were selected, based on teacher perception of school culture, for on-site interviews. These sites included four schools from the "more positive" outlier group and four schools from the "more negative" outlier group. Within each group several other factors were considered in determining sites for visitation. These included (1) the state the school is located in, (2) the demographic classification of the community (urban, suburban, small town/rural), (3) the length of the principal's tenure, and (4) the principal's effectiveness, as determined by scores on the *Audit of Principal Effectiveness (Form 1-88)*, developed by Valentine and Bowman⁶. This was done in order to provide a balanced representation in schools visited.

Though there was variety represented in each of the outlier groups, building visits were made with the schools chosen in order to maximize that variety and visit schools representative of the above descriptors. After data was collected and analyzed, four schools with very positive cultures and four schools with very negative cultures were visited in order for observations to be made and interviews to be conducted. The principals at these schools were interviewed, as were several staff members. The purpose of the interviews was to gather data to answer the question,

"Are there differences in the manner in which principals of schools with more positive cultures and principals of schools with more negative cultures (a) lead and conduct school operations, (b) communicate with stakeholders, and (c) foster relationships?" The following focuses on the summary of the findings from these interviews.

Specific Differences Are Identified

These findings affirm the significance of the principal's behavior in creating and/or sustaining a positive school culture.

1. The principals of schools with more positive cultures **placed high value on being visible throughout the day**. Despite other demands on their time, these principals saw their visibility as a top priority. One of these principals told me, "Being visible is vitally important to my success here. It helps create that friendly tone kids, teachers, and parents need." Principals of schools with more negative cultures placed high value on paperwork. They valued visibility, but saw it as something that could only occur when the paperwork was completed. Each of the principals of schools with more positive cultures were visible during student arrival time, lunch time, dismissal, and at various other times throughout the day. They all felt that these were times that helped them set the tone for the students. They also saw these opportunities as great ways to prevent discipline problems.

The teachers in these schools appreciated the principal's visibility. They felt that it gave everybody a sense of calm to know that the principal was there.

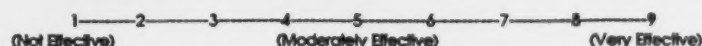
AUDIT OF PRINCIPAL EFFECTIVENESS

TEACHER FORM 1-88

DIRECTIONS

There are 80 statements in this instrument. The statements describe specific principalship skills. Because teachers work more closely with principals than any other professional group, teachers' perceptions are particularly important. Please take a few minutes to read each statement and mark the answer sheet accordingly. Please respond to each specific skill rather than generalizing about overall administrative ability. DO NOT record your name. All responses will be reported as group, not individual, data. Please be honest and candid in your responses.

For each item, mark the number on the answer sheet which corresponds to HOW EFFECTIVELY YOU PERCEIVE YOUR PRINCIPAL PERFORMS EACH OF THE SKILLS. Please use the following nine-point scale as the measure of effectiveness.



1. The principal assists the faculty in developing an understanding of, and support for, the beliefs and attitudes which form the basis of the educational value system of the school.
2. The principal provides for the identification of, and the reaching of consensus on, the educational goals of the school.
3. The principal has high, professional expectations and standards for self, faculty and school.
4. The principal helps the faculty develop high, professional expectations and standards for themselves and the school.
5. The principal envisions future goals and directions for the school.
6. The principal encourages changes in school programs that lead to a better school for the students.
7. The principal communicates to teachers the directions the school's programs need to take for growth.
8. The principal develops plans for the cooperation and involvement of the community, individuals and agencies with the school.
9. The principal utilizes resources from outside the school to assist in the study, development implementation and/or evaluation of the school.
10. The principal provides for the gathering of information and feedback from individuals and agencies in the community.
11. The principal provides for the dissemination of information to individuals and agencies in the community.
12. The principal is supportive of, and operates within, the policies of the district.
13. The principal maintains good rapport and a good working relationship with other administrators of the district.

This is page 1 of a 4-page (80-items) audit. To obtain the entire audit response forms, send \$1 for postage to Editor, JER, P.O. Box 657, Camp Hill, PA 17001-0657.

Positive culture principals see themselves as role models for both teacher and students.

They also commented that this visibility seemed to have a positive impact on the students. There were fewer disruptions because everybody knew that the principal was watching. There was also a sense of cohesiveness, as they viewed the principal's presence as a way to hold everything together. These teachers all mentioned how comfortable they felt having the principal visit their classrooms throughout the day. In two of the schools with more positive cultures, the teachers mentioned that they enjoyed pulling the principal into their lessons.

The principals of schools with more negative cultures were rarely seen outside of the office. While these principals all seemed to understand the importance of being visible, they saw no way of doing it. They felt victimized by paperwork and regarded it as their top priority. They also mentioned strong unions as a reason why they didn't visit classrooms often. Three of the principals of schools with more negative cultures mentioned that teachers seemed uptight at the thought of impromptu principal visits. The teachers in these schools seemed to understand the principal's dilemma. They all commented that the principal had a great deal of paperwork to attend to. However, they also commented that the principal's presence and visibility during the day would be a benefit to the whole school.

2. The principals of schools with more positive cultures **engaged in a variety of communication methods.** While they highly valued face to face communication, these principals also placed written communication with stakeholders as a high priority. This is in contrast to the behavior of principals of schools with more negative cultures. While they, too, may have valued communication, they often felt that it was difficult to find the time to do it effectively. One of the principals of a school with a more negative culture even commented that he used to send newsletters home to parents, but now had "no time for written communication."

The teachers seemed to value principals who placed a high priority on communication. Three of the teacher groups of schools with more positive cultures praised their principal's concern about their personal lives. These teachers said that it was comforting to know that the principal cared about them and was concerned about them on a personal level. Teachers in schools with more negative cultures did not mention this attribute.

One of the teachers from a school with a more positive culture mentioned the principal's capacity for knowing when to seek out teachers with a concern. This teacher said that if she passed by the office and glanced at the principal while he was engaged in some other task, the principal looked for her

as soon as he was free to find out what she needed. Other teachers in schools with more positive cultures referred to the same sense the principal had of their communication needs. Teachers in schools with more negative cultures also failed to mention this attribute.

3. The principals of schools with more positive cultures **worked at communicating with stakeholders and fostering relationships** in good times as well as in bad times. The principals of schools with more negative cultures only did these things in bad times. In two of the schools with more negative cultures, teachers told me that they only heard from the principal if there was a problem. This created a sense of anxiety whenever these teachers saw or heard from the principal. As one teacher told me, "Whenever he's looking for me, I stop and wonder what I've done wrong." In these schools, the teachers said that they never heard anything good about their job performances from the principal.

In schools with more positive cultures, teachers spoke of the principal's ability to "celebrate their successes." The teachers in one of these schools showed me samples of some of the little gifts the principal had placed in their mailboxes. The teachers spoke of their principal's regular affirmations. These affirmations, they shared, made them feel valued. The teachers in these schools felt that it was important that they worked hard and always gave their best effort, so as not to disappoint the principal.

4. The principals of schools with more positive cultures took an active role in **making sure the physical environment of the school was attractive** and child-centered. They took pride in their school buildings and felt that it

was important for school to be reflective of children and their learning. The principals of schools with more negative cultures took a very passive role in regards to the school building's physical environment. They were quick to blame others for the unattractive conditions of the facilities.

All four of the principals of schools with more positive cultures made mention of how important they believed it to be for faculty members to display student work. They all spoke of furnishings they had installed on weekends to help make the school building more attractive. While they told me about conversations that they had urging teachers to display student work, all four principals felt that the physical atmosphere of their school buildings was ultimately their responsibility.

The principals of schools with more negative cultures were much quicker to blame teachers, custodial staff members, or maintenance crews for the lack of stimulating furnishings in their school buildings. One of these principals said, "I've been after maintenance for years to put bulletin boards in the hallway." Another one told me that teachers were afraid to display student work for fear of it being vandalized.

5. The principals of schools with more positive cultures **shared leadership responsibilities with other staff members** when appropriate. The principals of schools with more negative cultures were much more reluctant to do this. In one of the schools with a more positive culture, the principal said, "We have faculty meetings once a month, but I don't run all the meetings." He said that teachers were often in charge of all or part of a meeting. If a particular teacher or group of teachers had an issue to discuss with the rest of

Principals—Positive or Negative?

the faculty, they went ahead and ran whichever part of the meeting was devoted to that issue.

Two of the principals of schools with more negative cultures repeatedly referred to themselves as the boss. One of them said, "I listen to ideas if they're good ones, but they (teachers) need to remember that I'm the boss." Another one said he wanted teachers to share his leadership sometimes, but he lamented, "They're just not good at it." These principals felt very uncomfortable if they were not in charge of meeting agendas. They expressed concern that meetings would become chaotic without their leadership. In the schools with more positive cultures, the principals did not fear chaos but felt, instead, that teachers who were empowered to lead may rise to the occasion.

6. All four of the principals of schools with more positive cultures **referred to themselves as role models**. Three of them mentioned that they put long hours into their jobs so that teachers could see that they were willing to work just as hard as they expected teachers to do. All four of them mentioned that children need stable adult role models in their lives. They all felt that one of their responsibilities was to show a positive, nurturing, and stable demeanor to the children. Speaking of her principal, one of the teachers from a school with a more positive culture said, "I've never seen him in a bad mood, and he's had plenty of reasons to be in one."

None of the principals of schools with more negative cultures mentioned their responsibility as role models. Two of them referred to the importance of teachers being role models, but made no mention of themselves. Teachers in these schools expressed concerns that

their principals didn't realize their impact on morale. One teacher told me, "It would be nice for the children to see him in a good mood once in a while."

7. The principals of schools with more positive cultures put a **great deal of effort into being organized**. They all praised their secretaries as being crucial to their success in this area. Three of the principals of schools with more negative cultures listed organization as their biggest weakness. Their teachers echoed this sentiment, as well. One teacher told me in referring to her principal's lack of organization, "He always tells me things several days after the fact."

The differences in organizational strengths between the two groups were evident when I made my visits. In all four of the schools with more positive cultures, the principal was expecting me, made me feel welcome, and had several people scheduled for me to speak with. **This was not true** in any of the schools with more negative cultures. In each of these school buildings the principal was unavailable when I arrived for my scheduled appointment, and I felt like I was an intruder. In three of these schools, the teachers I was there to see had no idea that I was coming to their school.

8. The principals of schools with more positive cultures **believed that their schools were outstanding ones**. They took great pride in their students, staff, and parents. These principals believed that their schools accomplished things above and beyond what is typically expected of schools. Two of the principals of schools with more positive cultures referred to their teaching staffs as "top notch." All four of them mentioned their appreciation for

How Data Was Collected

On-site structured interviews were conducted to gather data used in answering the question, "Are there differences in the manners in which principals of schools with more positive cultures and principals of schools with more negative cultures (a) lead and conduct school operations, (b) communicate with stakeholders, and (c) foster relationships?"

Using the data compiled from the *School Culture Survey*, developed by the Middle Level Leadership Center in 1998, the upper third of the responding schools were considered schools with more positive cultures and the lower third were considered schools with more negative cultures. The more positive third and the more negative third were considered "outlier" groups. Eight schools were selected, based on teacher perception of school culture, for on-site interviews. These sites included four schools from the "more positive" outlier group and four schools from the "more negative" outlier group. Within each group several other factors were considered in determining sites for visitation. These included (1) the state the school is located in, (2) the demographic classification of the community (urban, suburban, small town/rural), (3) the length of the principal's tenure, and (4) the principal's effectiveness, as determined by scores on the Audit of Principal Effectiveness (Form 1-88), which was developed by Valentine

School Culture Survey Middle Level Leadership Center Form 1-29-98

1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree

To what degree do these statements describe the conditions at your school					
	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. Leaders value teachers' ideas.					
2. Leaders in this school trust the professional judgements of teachers.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Leaders take time to praise the teachers that perform well.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Teachers are involved in the decision-making process.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Leaders in our school facilitate teachers working together.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Teachers are kept informed on current issues in the school.	1	2	3	4	5
7. My involvement in policy or decision making is taken seriously.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Teachers are rewarded for experimenting with new ideas and techniques.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Leaders support risk-taking and innovative thinking.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Administrators protect instruction and planning time.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Teachers are encouraged to share ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Teachers have opportunities for dialogue and planning across grades and subject.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Teachers spend considerable time planning together.					
14. Teachers take time to observe each other teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Teachers are generally aware of what other teachers are teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Teachers work together to develop and evaluate and projects.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Teaching practice disagreements are voiced openly and discussed.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Teachers utilize professional networks to obtain information and resources for classroom instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Teachers regularly seek ideas from seminars, colleagues, and conferences.					
20. Professional development is valued by the faculty.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Teachers maintain a current knowledge base about the learning process.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Teachers are aggressively curious regarding issues about learning.	1	2	3	4	5
23. The faculty values school improvement.	1	2	3	4	5
24. When resources become scarce, professional development becomes a priority.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Teachers trust each other.	1	2	3	4	5
26. Teachers are willing to help out whenever there is a problem.	1	2	3	4	5
27. Teachers' ideas are valued by other teachers.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Teachers work cooperatively in groups.	1	2	3	4	5
29. Teachers do not compete for power and resources.	1	2	3	4	5
30. Teachers are receptive to constructive suggestions regarding the practice of teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
31. Teachers support the mission of the school.					
32. The school mission provides a clear sense of direction for teachers.	1	2	3	4	5
33. Teachers understand the mission of the school.	1	2	3	4	5
34. The school mission statement reflects the values of the community.	1	2	3	4	5
35. Teaching performance reflects the mission of the school.	1	2	3	4	5
36. Teachers believe that student learning can be influenced by effective teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
37. Teachers value the group and individual needs of learners.	1	2	3	4	5
38. Teachers share a sense of self-efficacy, the capacity to affect learning.	1	2	3	4	5
39. Teachers and parents have common expectations for student performance.	1	2	3	4	5
40. Parents trust teachers' professional judgement.	1	2	3	4	5
41. Teachers and parents communicate frequently about student performance.	1	2	3	4	5
42. Teachers share ideas, knowledge, and techniques of teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
43. Students generally accept responsibility for their schooling, for example they engage mentally in class and complete homework.	1	2	3	4	5

and Bowman. This was done in order to provide a balanced representation in schools visited. Though there was variety represented in each of the outlier groups, building visits were made with the schools chosen in order to maximize that variety and visit schools representative of the above descriptors.

The principal was then contacted at each of the selected schools, and dates and times were secured for the on-site interviews to take place. I, as interviewer, in cooperation with the principal, selected an hour of the day in which to conduct the teacher interview. Teachers who were available at this time were considered candidates for the interview. This made feasible the use of the interview methodology in this study. DJF

Principals—Positive or Negative?

the cooperative, supportive Parent Teacher Organizations they enjoyed.

None of the principals of schools with more negative cultures mentioned a belief in the excellence of their schools. Instead, there was talk of the multitude of problems facing their schools. Three of these principals spoke of "laziness" or "a bad attitude" when describing their teaching staffs. While speaking of parent relations, all four of the principals of schools with more negative cultures mentioned the "problem parents" only.

9. In each of the schools with a more positive culture, there was a **tremendous feeling of self-respect** among stakeholders. The positive feelings that the principals had about the schools seemed to be transferred to the staff, students, and parents. In one of the schools with a more positive culture, the teachers I spoke with considered their school to be "one of the best in the country." In all four of these schools, the teacher groups spoke openly of their pride in the school. In these schools, the culture seemed to support stakeholders who cared about the school. They all had active and supportive parent groups, and the hallways and entryways of these four schools were filled with motivational banners and pictures touting school pride.

In the schools with more negative cultures, these feelings of pride on self-respect were not evident. The hallways and entryways were virtually barren in three of these schools. In speaking with the teacher groups, there was no talk of school pride. All four of the schools with more negative cultures had weak or nonexistent parent groups.

10. **Staff meetings were considered to be valuable experiences for teachers and principals** in the schools with

more positive cultures. Not only were these meetings viewed as opportunities for information sharing, but they were also seen by the principals as opportunities to engage in the shared leadership they valued. During staff meetings, two of the principals of schools with more positive cultures stated that teachers had opportunities to lead discussions and help build consensus. Furthermore, all four of the principals of schools with more positive cultures believed that their teachers valued these meetings. This belief was reinforced through conversations with the teacher groups in three of these schools.

In the schools with more negative cultures, staff meetings were not valued as important by the principals. Three of these principals stated that they did not hold regularly scheduled meetings. One principal of a school with a more negative culture explained that he only held meetings when absolutely necessary because "teachers' time is valuable." Another one stated that it was more efficient to communicate with staff members through e-mail. Teachers in this school lamented that they often miss out on important information because they forget to check their e-mail. They indicated a deep concern over the lack of staff meetings.

Conclusions

This study has led to several conclusions regarding the role of principals in fostering, developing, and sustaining positive school cultures.

- Principals are the single most influential people in our school buildings. Their behaviors, both deliberate and accidental, have a tremendous influence on the culture of a school. Being

In each of the schools with a more positive culture, there was a tremendous feeling of self respect .

an effective principal is crucial to the success of a school and has a significant impact on its daily operations.

- Principals need to realize that their visibility, communication skills, personality, work ethic, and beliefs have tremendous effects on school culture. Their role is important, and the creation and sustenance of their school's culture is largely their responsibility.

- Being a visible role model enables principals to contribute to the positive culture of their schools. Principals need to realize and accept the responsibility for fostering and molding positive school cultures. Being visible and recognizing that many people view them as role models will enable principals to inspire others toward greatness. This will invariably have a positive impact on the culture of their schools.

- Recognizing the power of regular, purposeful, and positive communication is an important way in which principals influence school culture. When stakeholders feel that they have been informed, the culture of the organization is strengthened. Principals must recognize this. Communicating on a personal as well as professional level gives principals the opportunity to be seen as more than simply the leaders of their buildings. This familiarity leads to increased collegiality, which ultimately has tremendous influence on the culture of a school.

- Showing the pride they have in their schools is another way in which principals have an impact on their school's culture. Principals must realize that unless they value a school that is nurturing, visually attractive, and student focused, they will not help create a culture that supports these ideals. Showcasing their strong work ethic helps successful school principals show that the business of school is important. It also helps influence stakeholders to work as hard as they can.

- It is of tremendous importance that principals recognize their role in creating and fostering positive school cultures. It is the most important, influential role in a school community. Further, they must realize that there are deliberate behaviors that can readily influence a school's culture and move it in a more positive direction. The behaviors of the principal are the key, and these behaviors must be carefully measured to insure that the kinds of positive schools children need and deserve are created.

The relationship between principal effectiveness and school culture is strong and will be instrumental to understand as new leaders are trained and as experienced leaders plot their own professional growth. ☛

NOTE: Pages 14-16 contain additional content by Douglas Fiore, his author credit and references.

Principal's Task

Positive Cultures

Visibility	☺☺☺☺	In classrooms/hallways
Communications	☺☺☺☺	On-going/ Various methods
Management Style	☺☺☺☺	Empower others appropriately
Role Model	☺☺☺☺	Show positive demeanor
Organization	☺☺☺☺	Excellent skills
Parent Relations	☺☺☺☺	Appreciate parent organizations
Staff Meetings	☺☺☺☺	Valued part of the culture
Public Relations	☺☺☺☺	Take great pride in school

Signs of Positive and Negative Culture Behavior

As the tables indicate, great differences in principal leadership behaviors exist between schools with **more positive** cultures and schools with **more negative** cultures. The differences indicate the tremendous impact that good principals can have in creating and sustaining positive school cultures.

- Principals must be keenly aware of the impact their **visibility** has on creating and fostering a positive school culture. They must realize that it gives stakeholders a sense of comfort knowing that the principal is around. Additionally, they should structure their days so as to allow for being a part of less structured times, such as lunch and passing times. They would also be well served to be present in classrooms. This creates a feeling of comfort with

teachers, which makes it much easier for the principal to lead.

- Elementary principals must work at keeping **communication** lines open. Their visibility is one way in which this can be accomplished. Another way, which principals must be aware of, is through regular written communication. The impact this has on teachers is significant, partly because it makes them feel important. Written communication with parents is essential also. When parents can depend on the principal to communicate important events at school, school culture is enhanced because a feeling can be built among all stakeholders that they are important parts of the team.

- Principals need to be aware of the benefit **shared governance** has on school culture. When teachers and parents are appropriately empowered, they begin to feel a sense of ownership

Principal's Task

Negative Cultures

Visibility	☹☹☹☹	In office
Communications	☹☹☹☹	Only occur if there's a problem
Management Style	☹☹☹☹	Always top-down
Role Model	☹☹☹☹	Doesn't recognize role as model
Organization	☹☹☹☹	Poor skills
Parent Relations	☹☹☹☹	Only recognize "problem" parents
Staff Meetings	☹☹☹☹	Rarely occur
Public Relations	☹☹☹☹	Constantly make excuses

Questions to Learn about a Principal's Concerns for a Positive Culture

As research has shown, healthy and sound school cultures correlate strongly with increased student achievement and motivation, and with teacher productivity and satisfaction. These facts make the creation of positive school cultures a leadership imperative. Since the healthiest school cultures are ones that build feelings of community among stakeholders, it is the leader's responsibility to move groups of people in the direction of maturity as a community.

Stakeholders need to understand whether or not their school leaders are exhibiting the behaviors that are the best predictors of a positive school culture. To do so, they can ask several questions:

1. Does the principal communicate with stakeholders?
2. Is the principal visible?
3. Does the principal exhibit positive modeling behaviors to stakeholders?
4. Does the principal empower others to lead when appropriate?
5. Are staff meetings important mediums for communication?
6. Does the principal exhibit strong organizational skills?
7. Does the principal recognize the positive contributions of parents?
8. Does the principal appear to take great pride in the school?

As research conducted in 261 schools in Illinois and Indiana has concluded, principals who are concerned with these things are found in schools with positive cultures. Conversely, when principals fail to recognize the importance of the eight questions above, morale tends to be low and the

overall school culture is negative.

The behaviors of a school principal in these areas are significant, as the challenge of shaping and sustaining a positive culture in the school is largely a responsibility of that official.

Interview Questions Used with the Staff for the Culture Study

1. How would you describe the culture of your school? (define culture if necessary)
2. What does the principal do (or fail to do) to affect the culture of this school?
 - Describe specific behaviors of the principal.
 - Tell me about particular policies or practices that the principal has created that have an impact on the culture of this school.
3. Describe the principal's methods of communicating with stakeholders.
 - Students
 - Staff
 - Parents
 - Community members
 - Central office/School board
4. How does the principal lead and conduct school operations?
5. How does the principal foster relationships?
6. How does the principal spend his/her school day?
7. Is there anything further you would like to tell me about your principal?
8. Is there anything further you would like to tell me about the culture of your school?

The same questions, with appropriate language changes, were used with the principals).

Principals—Positive or Negative?

Modeled appropriately by the principal, this concept of empowerment can trickle down to students. When all stakeholders feel that the school is their school, culture is enhanced.

- It is important for principals to be **organized**. A principal with a clear vision and the organizational capacity to carry out that vision positively affects school culture. Communicating items of importance to teachers after the fact and failing to attend to tasks that needed immediate attention are pitfalls that disorganized principals can fall into. These behaviors can have a negative effect on school culture.

- Principals should **show pride** in the physical environment of their schools. Principals positively affect school culture when they take the time to work with others in the school to make a building visually attractive and stimulating to children. Expecting staff members to do the same helps create and foster a culture that believes school is important.

- Finally, principals need to be aware of the impact they have as **role models**. A positive attitude can be contagious and must be modeled by the principal. The chief school leader must also take pride in sharing and displaying the work of students so that they may learn to value what they've learned. In short, a successful school principal is one who understands the culture of the school and can therefore influence it from within.

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Note: The audit of principal effectiveness was created by Dr. Jerry Valentine, director of the Middle Level leadership Center (at the University of Missouri-Columbia, Columbia, Missouri 65211). Steve Gruenert created the school culture survey under the direction of Dr. Valentine. The audit and survey documents are reprinted here with the permission of Dr. Valentine. Requests to use these documents should be directed to him.

Developing a Winning School Climate

By Jim Sweeney

"Climate" is an atmosphere created by the feelings that people have about their school—a combination of students, teachers, administrators, parents, bus drivers, office personnel, custodians, cafeteria workers and others who play an important role in the life of the school. When a school has a winning climate, people in the school community are proud, connected and committed.

Effective schools share characteristics such as these:

- **A supportive, stimulating environment**, including spirit, positive attitudes, fun and humor, themes emphasizing growth, creativity, communications and student involvement in decision-making.
- **Student-centered**, with a focus on "What's best for the students?" Turning in to the students, promotion of active learning, planning for variety, and providing a flexible curriculum that allows for multiple student differences.
- **Positive expectations**. Expect the best and you're likely to receive it.
- **Feedback**. Catch others succeeding and provide pertinent praise on the spot, chart your feedback, and give negative feedback in positive ways.
- **Rewards**. Bring a crowd into the winners' circle.
- **Communication**. Keep the lines open and the flow positive.
- **Achievement**, including setting and tracking personal goals, and putting the goals in writing for both individuals and classrooms as a group.
- **Trust**. The glue that holds the school and its people together. Be consistent, guard confidentiality, be fair, forgive and forget, tell the truth, maintain eye contact, and respect others. ☛

Excerpted from *Tips for Improving School Climate* by Jim Sweeney, published by the American Association of School Administrators, 1990.

PHOTO GALLERY: Geri Kody.....



Relationships already exist between a school CEO and newspaper reporters. This happens with or without a planned communication program. It is up to the CEO to be sure that the relationship is positive.

*Richard Colvin, Education Reporter
Los Angeles Times*

Case Study

Live at Five: The Curse at Freedom High

by Phylis Johnson

His high school students loved Mr. Tracy Todder. Youthful and somewhat lanky, Tracy looked like one of his students. Indeed, he dressed and talked like them. Off campus, the students would see him in name brand T-shirts, jeans, and gym shoes. Even during school, he would wear khakis, a sporty jersey and a flashy tie. In class, he spouted the latest teen jargon: *spiffy*, *sweet*, and *that rocks*. One teen word best described Tracy—COOL.

Now if other teachers had tried to act cool, the students would have laughed at them. But students saw Mr. Todder as a big brother, rather than as a teacher. He listened patiently to their problems after school and he would even swear and use street curse words on occasion during class discussions.

Principal Lisa Vivers liked Mr. Todder, too. Feedback she received about his work indicated that he had a way of making math and physics fun. Add to that, he was the girls' track coach. His team won state last year, and this year, everyone expected the team to win again.

Freedom High was one of three high schools in White Hawk County, about 50 miles northeast of Philadelphia. The district catered to middle-to-upper class income families, and was known for its

high academic standards. Freedom High's teams never won anything in sports before Mr. Todder's arrival. The press had been great for the district.

The superintendent's daughter was on Todder's track team. As a single parent, Superintendent Harry Wonderfield certainly liked it when his daughter, 16, was happy, for it made his life a bit easier. She had been having trouble with her grades and attitude soon after her mother's death nearly two years ago. Coach Todder gave her encouragement to join track last year, and subsequently her attendance and schoolwork improved.

One night, Bill, a senior in one of Mr. Todder's math class mentioned to his mother about his proclivity to swearing in class. To Bill, it seemed harmless. His mother didn't laugh. Indeed, she called a neighbor who also had a student at Freedom High, and she in turn called several other parents.

The next morning, Principal Vivers received four calls from angry parents. Vivers told them that she would handle the incident. Vivers, however, knew Todder was not easily replaceable—girls' track coach, physics, and math teacher, loved by all.

By 10 a.m., Coach Todder was seated in her office. Principal Vivers cleared

As she picked up the receiver, she heard a booming voice yell, "What in the world is going on at your school? Has everyone gone mad!"

her throat several times before speaking. Todder knew why he was in Vivers' office. Several students, stopping him in the school hallway, warned him earlier that morning about their parents' complaints.

Todder broke the ice. He said, "What can I say? I should have known better. I'll watch my language." Principal Vivers seemed surprised. Mr. Todder had stolen the steam from her speech. But, again, she was relieved. She reiterated the importance of this matter, but also acknowledged his value to the district. After about five minutes, the meeting was over.

Principal Vivers leaned back in her chair, and sighed. That afternoon, only one more parent called her office.

But a few minutes after school had dismissed, the phone rang.

As she picked up the receiver, she heard a booming voice yell, "What in the world is going on at your school? Has everyone gone mad!" Superintendent Wonderfield was never one for formalities, like "Hello," or "How are you doing?" He had been superintendent for almost 20 years, and every year his hair and patience grew thinner.

"What do you mean?" Principal Vivers responded.

"Only minutes ago, Channel 12 reported live from your school." The

CEO told her that a reporter had interviewed students who were leaving the school grounds, asking them whether any of their high school teachers swore in class. The reporter also interviewed members of the track team, with Coach Todder adding his input. The coach even slipped and told one student to get her #&*! in the shower. The camera recorded it all. Channel 12 wrapped the live report, saying more details coming up on "Live at Five."

Principal Vivers explained that she had already warned Coach Todder, but the superintendent seem unimpressed by her handling of the situation.

Wonderfield was irritated, and added that Coach Todder appeared to be only one of several teachers who swore in class according to students just interviewed by Channel 12. "What do you do all day? Don't you know what is going on in your school?" said Wonderfield. Then he warned, "Don't say a thing to the press until I call the school board."

Principal Vivers looked out her window. Looking past the wild jasmine growing near the bleachers, she saw Coach Todder and his students on the track. Her eyes scanned the field—no sign of the Channel 12 News Crew.

A second later, her phone rang again. A secretary buzzed Vivers, and announced, "It's Channel 12."

Vivers responded, "Tell them, I'm not in."

"It's too late," she whispered. "They know you are here. I'm sorry."

A number of thoughts raced through her head. Principal Vivers knew the superintendent told her not to speak to the press. However, if she did not respond to their questions, it would seem as if she were covering up the incident. Coach Todder was a great teacher, and all the students loved him. The district needed a top notch physics teacher. On the other hand, what kind of values was he sending his students? He was a winner, but he was also a loser as far as common sense would seem to dictate. She also knew that the superintendent could easily choose to fire her instead of Coach Todder if she did not solve this dilemma. And, what should she do about those other teachers who allegedly swore in class? Was that really true?

As Vivers opened the door of her office, a reporter stuck a microphone in her face. The camera was rolling. ❧

Phylis Johnson has worked in various media in Houston, Philadelphia and St. Louis for 20 years. She is now an associate professor in the Department of Radio-Television at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. She has published numerous articles, several of which examine the role of media in education.

Case Study Response: Mouthing Off To The Media

By Kelly McKerrow

Tracy Todder's swearing is an unfortunate incidence of poor judgment by a teacher. It is a serious, but not an unusual, problem for school administrators. This is because the actions of teachers are public and subject to the judgment of a variety of groups and individuals. The students thought Mr. Todder was "awesome" and "cool." The parents thought otherwise. Principal Vivers had another perspective altogether.

What makes this the case particularly problematic from a public relations standpoint are the unfortunate circumstances that led up to the notification of the news media. This problem could have been averted if Bill's mother had checked first with Principal Vivers. Instead, she chose to contact another parent, which ultimately led to an angry chain reaction. Principal Vivers now finds herself confronted by angry parents, a fuming superintendent, an aggressive reporter, and accusations about her entire faculty. Todder punctuated the situation with his colorful, on camera display for Channel 12 News.

Three key issues need to be dealt with in this case: 1, handling the media; 2, dealing with Todder; and 3, responding to the accusation of widespread swearing among faculty members.

Vivers' most immediate problem is the press. Although the superintendent told her to "say nothing" until he contacted the school board, circumstances make it impossible to ignore the press.

CASE STUDY: Live at Five

Avoiding comment now would only serve to fuel speculation rather than stifle it. Besides, the board will be well aware of the situation by the time this interview airs on "Live at Five."

However, Vivers should be careful not to overreact despite the fact that she is faced with a rolling camera just outside her office. She should take a deep breath and wait for the reporters first question. To say anything before finding out exactly what a reporter wants is ill advised. Given Supt. Wonderfield's summary of the live report, Vivers will probably be asked to react to Todder's swearing. She might also anticipate questions about widespread swearing among the faculty at Freedom High School.

There are factors that the principal needs to keep foremost in her mind. First, she needs to be clear about the facts. At this point, she knows that she met with a teacher (Todder) four hours earlier in an immediate response to parental concerns about swearing. Second, she needs to protect the confidentiality of her faculty. A meeting between a teacher and administrator is not subject to public review. Vivers should not comment about Todder specifically nor the faculty in general. What Vivers can say is that in response to parental concerns expressed this morning, she acted quickly. She could say that, as she determines the facts,

she will respond quickly if action is warranted. She should not speculate about accusations against Todder or other faculty members nor should she be drawn into a discussion about swearing. If pressed on the issues, Vivers might say, "I cannot comment until I learn more of the facts."

The more important issue here is Todder. Certainly, there are things to recommend him as an educator. He is a good classroom teacher and he is well liked by the students. His exceptional coaching ability might work against him in this case. Coaching is a high profile position that takes place outside the classroom in an informal setting. As such, it places an additional burden on coaches to maintain professional standards of teaching beyond the traditional classroom and school grounds. Swearing at any time or in any place violates professional teaching standards.

In this case, Todder violated those standards both in the classroom and on the field. Being viewed as a big brother rather than as a teacher, in addition to swearing, suggests immaturity on Todder's part. This is supported by his inability to monitor his own language while a reporter was taping him. He acknowledged the problem less than four hours earlier and told Vivers that he would watch his language. Moreover, Todder did not contact

Vivers should be careful not to overreact despite the fact that she is faced with a rolling camera just outside her office.

Avoiding comment now would only serve to fuel speculation rather than stifle it. Besides, the board will be well aware of the situation by the time this interview airs on "Live at Five."

Vivers about the televised interviews of him or his students.

Todder's actions reflect a decided lack of good judgment. Vivers should call him in immediately, after she handles the press, and ask for an explanation. She should summarize, in writing, both this meeting and the one they had earlier in the day. The summary should clearly state her expectation that Todder will not swear in the presence of students. She should give a copy to Todder before he exits her office that afternoon. She will need to follow up with frequent, unscheduled observations of Todder in both classroom and coaching situations.

Finally, the televised accusation of widespread swearing among faculty has to be dealt with as soon as possible. Vivers should personally interview the students who made the accusations. This should be done after she speaks to Todder, but before the students go home for the evening, if possible. If the students are not available, the interviews should be done first thing in the morning. Additional interviews to corroborate or refute the accusations should be conducted as well.

In order to thwart rumor and speculation, Vivers should write a brief memo to the entire faculty outlining the "Live at Five" broadcast from the

night before, her actions to the point, and the direction she intends to pursue. She should schedule a faculty meeting for after school to discuss the incident and any further developments during the day. She should discuss her expectations with regard to classroom decorum and the code of conduct and give each faculty member a written copy of them. Even if the students' comments are ultimately unsubstantiated, this could be an opportunity for professional development. If the accusations are warranted, Vivers should consider authorizing an ad hoc committee to study the issue and make recommendations.

Kelly McKerrow is an associate professor in the Department of Educational Administration at Southern Illinois University. She teaches a graduate course on school-community relations, from which she draws upon her professional experience and academic research.

PHOTO GALLERY: Geri Kody.....



*Henry's Conclusion:
Nothing is over just because
somebody says it is.*

Henry Garcia

Book Reviews

By Art Steller

Benchmarking: A Guide for Educators

By Sue Tucker.

Corwin Press, Inc., 2455 Teller Rd.,
Thousand Oaks, CA 91320. 1996.

Benchmarking is all the rage today in many business and nonprofit organizations. It is often part of quality management or continuous improvements programs, and comprehensive reforms or planning strategies usually cite it as a component. Many educational agencies are also moving in this direction, although benchmarking has been a common theme in this field to some degree.

Educators have long appropriated for themselves the best practices of others; Tucker's *Benchmarking* makes this process more systematic and effective. "The foundation of benchmarking is education—transferring learning from one group to another." This book shows readers how to examine someone else's best practice, measure the results, and adapt it.

This is a guide that provides the rationale and the step-by-step process

in which problems are defined and a determination made as to their resolution through benchmarking. Next, the ideal school or organization is identified, and questionnaires and guidelines for site visits and research are developed. Research is then summarized and solutions adapted.

While more complex and inclusive volumes are available on the subject, this guide can jumpstart a redesign of a program or department. Initiating change is half the battle, and this guidebook will save study time and move you rapidly into action.



Book Reviews

Making/Marketing Your School The School of Choice: How to Be Competitive in Today's Education Marketplace.

By National School Public Relations
Association.

NSPRA, 15948 Derwood Rd., Rockville
MD 20855. 1994.

Educators may need this classic book-let now more than when it was originally produced by the National School Public Relations Association in 1994. The education marketplace has become increasingly competitive, and this simple guide can help you begin a marketing approach. Any educator, with or

without outstanding communication skills, can follow the steps in this workbook.

The reader's understanding is not slowed with research citations or jargon or even difficult vocabulary or sentence structure. Yet, research findings have been boiled down to their public relations essence. An effective facilitator or leader could whip through these pages in under an hour and be able to pull people together to fill-in the blanks and produce a marketing plan in less than three months.

Making/Marketing Your School The School of Choice is ideal for a school principal or for a school-based planning team.

Agenda-Setting

By James Dearing and
Everett Rogers.

Sage Publications, Inc., 2455
Teller Rd., Thousand Oaks,
CA 91320. 1996.

"Every social system must have an agenda...to prioritize the problems facing [the citizens] so it can decide where to start work. Such prioritization is necessary for a community and a society."

While the news media may not be able to influence people regarding what they should be thinking, it does determine to a great extent what they think about. Thus, the news media sets the public agenda. Who then sets the agenda for the news media?

The national level of



agenda setting has been well researched. The individual most responsible for creating the national public agenda is the president (and the White House staff). The clear number two factor is *The New York Times*, primarily since other media feed off the *Times*. The U.S. Congress comes in a distant third, with no clear-cut fourth place factor.

"Real world indicators," such as poverty levels, crime statistics, student test scores, and so forth, do not establish the public agenda, but rather provide substance as to how an issue is discussed. A "triggering event" such as the AIDS problem, a shooting, or some other crisis may influence the national agenda. However, even then national attention may fade if the issue is not picked up by the president, *The New York Times* or Congress.

Communication research in this area has been built around "the most important problem" data, which has been categorized in five groupings: foreign affairs, economics, social control, civil rights, and government issues such as corruption, lack of leadership and inefficiencies. Other matters may be highlighted from time to time by the public in these surveys.

Using the framework, models and research findings herein, it is easy to see why education has received so much negative focus over the last 15 years. What is not answered is if a positive issue can remain on the national agenda for 15 years or more, or if a perceived "solution" to education's problems was widely adopted, would education garner the same place on the agenda?

Parents Are Lifesavers: A Handbook for Parent Involvement in Schools

By Carol Batey.

Corwin Press Inc. 1996.

In this book, author Batey relays her personal experience, which begins with striking a deal with the school principal to place her child with the teacher she wants in exchange for volunteering at the school. She later becomes the co-president of the school parent organization, and from that platform, she wins an award and is acknowledged as a local expert on parental involvement.

At this point in her story, she asks the superintendent to create a job for her as parent coordinator with only some expense money as a cost. This book is a byproduct of what Batey did and what she recommends to improve parental involvement in public schools.

Much of the literature on this topic assumes that all educators desire having parents as active participants and that all parents are anxious to give of their time and energy for the school's goals. Neither, of course, is the case. This author offers some remedies for overcoming these constraints.

If you are looking for ways to increase parental involvement in the school, this handbook tells you how to create the proper climate for parents, starting from scratch, using the parents' expertise and developing ways to promote more of a partnership. The author takes the approach that "parents are lifesavers." Although there are clearly barriers to address, the author believes that the struggles are part of the ritual, because when educators and parents are jointly involved, "It works! It works!"



Synchronicity: The Inner Path of Leadership

By Joseph Jaworski.

Berrett-Koehler Pub., Inc., 155 Montgomery St., San Francisco, CA 94104. 1996.

Public relations staff are often called upon to explain the actions of various leaders in their organizations. People tend to conceive of leadership as the behavior of certain individuals, or the possession of certain qualities such as charisma, or who wins in a power struggle. The real essence is often overlooked, which according to Jaworski is "learning how to shape the future."

Perhaps if public attention could be shifted towards a concept of leadership as the creation of new realities, our society would be better served.

Communication officials could further the causes of their organizations by assisting people to understand current circumstances and how to participate "in the unfolding of the world."

The author, the son of Watergate prosecutor Leon Jaworski, leads the reader through his journey of self-discovery. By being in a state of commitment and openness, he believes we can experience "synchronicity."

This condition can

result in "predictable miracles," where everything comes successfully together in unbelievable ways.

Synchronicity tells a remarkable story of a search for values and the core elements of leadership. This book will aid anyone interested in exploring leadership or explaining it to others.

Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research

By Richard Krueger.

Sage Publications, Inc. 1994.

Focus groups have long been used by businesses to determine how to market products and services to customers. The effectiveness of this method has been clearly documented and evaluated. Politicians have likewise capitalized

upon the concept, using focus groups to supplement surveys and polls in creating strategies for gathering support and votes. Nonprofit organizations are also applying the technique to garner public support for their missions, projects and clients.

The author astutely recognizes the differences between commercial focus groups and those done for public nonprofit organizations, listing eight factors relating to them. Some of these are:

- Budgets are limited and often shrinking; consequently monies for research are often severely restricted.

- Policies and procedures often limit, and occasionally prohibit, the use of funds to pay participants in focus groups.

- The topic of inquiry is complex. In the public/nonprofit sector, focus groups are used to examine areas of concern that have considerable complexity and are typically dependent on motivational forces and characteristics of human behavior.

- Decision makers are diverse and nonspecific. Decisions are often slow because of multiple and overlapping audiences with decisions made by consensus.

- Volunteers represent a valuable and often untapped resource. These volunteers may be able to take on specific tasks that would be difficult or impossible for staff.

While author Krueger gives step-by-step approaches, specific forms and letters to use, and extremely practical material, he provides more than a basic manual. This piece includes sufficient introductory content to make it relevant to the novice, and those individuals who have conducted focus groups will find many practical suggestions to supplement their experience.

Educators can learn much about their communities by regularly conducting focus groups. School communication officials are well advised to learn and practice this technique.

Everybody's House-The School House: Best Techniques for Connecting Home, School and Community

By Carolyn Warner with Marilyn Curry.

Corwin Press, Inc. 1997.

Workable ideas for building bridges between the school, home and community can be found everywhere. But much of this volume was contributed by principals who were named as state "Principal of the Year" or recognized for their Blue Ribbon Schools (the national recognition program). The ideas presented here are some of the best public relation activities used in excellent schools.

Parent and family involvement is important in these schools, as the author states: "I have never met a parent who wanted her or his child to fail. However, some parents just don't know how to help their child succeed. School people do know how to help a child succeed, and they know that children succeed best when the home and school are partners."

Readers will learn how to create at-home and in-school involvement programs that work, provide purposeful opportunities for parents, include parents in decision-making, engage community stakeholders, form business-school partnerships, and reach diverse families (and to a certain extent, "unreachable" parents).

The recognition that some parents are truly problems for school person-

Book Reviews

nel, not to mention their own children, bathes the author's work in the light of realism.

Everybody's House will appeal to those who want solid ideas that have been tried and found to work, and who believe that the schoolhouse is the meeting place for the people who make up the home, school and community.

The following books were reviewed by Judith T. Witmer, EdD, Temple University, Harrisburg, PA, campus.

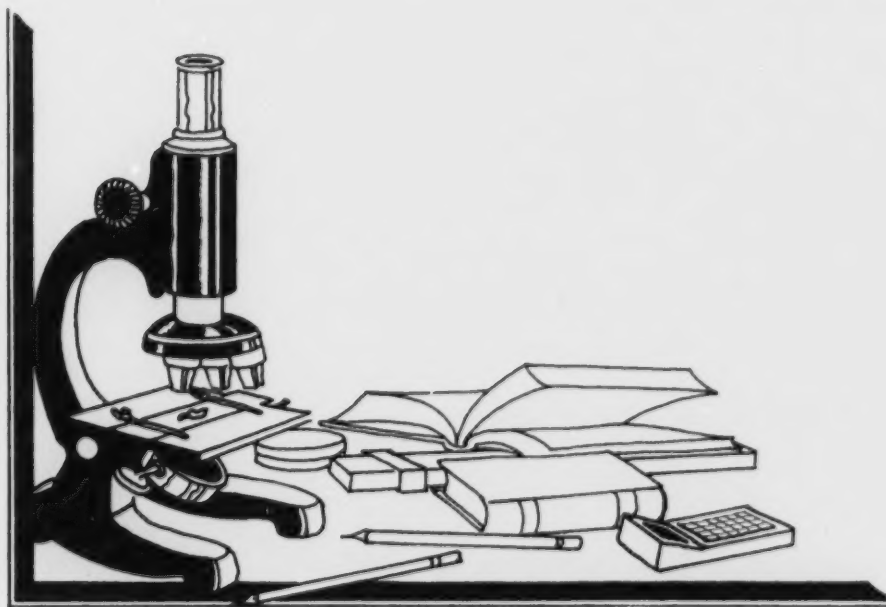
Ethics in Intercultural and International Communication.

Edited by Fred L. Casmir.

Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 10 Industrial Ave., Mahwah, NJ. 1997.

With the editing of numerous books on communication to his credit, Casmir, in this collection, steps a bit beyond the focus of his other publications. The thoughts and suggestions are timely both because of the burgeoning global economy and because of the need for an ethical perspective in intercultural/international relations. Fortunately, Casmir does not attempt to list values shared by all cultures; he merely acknowledges that values, morals and ethics establish a grounding for communication as an interactive process.

L. Steiner's inclusion of "feminist theory" as the basis for an ethical schema is intriguing, particularly to this reviewer. To extrapolate the hypothesis that women take a broader view of ethical situations and consider personal relationships when interacting bears consideration, but perhaps is not



yet conclusive enough to include in this collection. Contributor S. Olson skillfully takes the reader through various philosophical approaches to the question of intercultural communication, but ends by suggesting that the best course of action may be simply to "Do unto others..."

Casmir's own "third culture building model" offers *co-operation*, *com-muni-cation*, and *com-munity* which calls for a fluid approach; he does not go so far as to suggest "situational ethics."

Effective Fund-Raising Management.

By Kathleen S. Kelly.

Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. 1998.

This formidable 600+-page tome supports fund-raising as both an art and a science. An emerging career-industry-fund-raising (sometimes euphemistically called "development" by academe)—is not well understood by those outside the realm of finding, managing or awarding funds. Kelly has provided a much needed framework by integrating practice into theory. While fund-raising is not new, it is a wide-open industry in need of parameters. This is just what Kathleen Kelly has done so well in this book. This reader is grateful for the author and subject indices.

Fund-raising is an occupation in high demand. It is practiced by professionals as well as novices. By positioning fund-raising as a public relations function, Kelly has broadened the discipline's scope and has met her purpose to increase knowledge and promote understanding. The book is well-organized in three major areas: Practice, Principles, and Process.

In addition to acknowledging that the field offers an open career path, the author notes the growing number of graduate programs in nonprofit management. This information is confirmed in a report by *The New York Times* (18 April 1999) that further supports Kelly's findings that nonprofits of all types are expected to be professional as they take on an increasing amount of America's social-service work. This book is a fascinating "must-read" for anyone connected in any way to fund raising.

Mr. Magister



*Marketing is
the meaning of life.*

PHOTO GALLERY: Dale D. Gehman.



*No problem is so large or
complex that it can't be run
away from.*

Charlie Brown

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PHOTO GALLERY: Albert E. Holliday



*A Realistic Caution:
Whenever someone tells you,
"it's nothing personal," you are
about to get whatever in spades.*

A Scenario with Implications

The Silver Bullet Academy Is Coming To Town

by William J. Banach

Introduction

When will the U.S. Supreme Court make **The Big** decision? The one about vouchers and other uses of public funds to private and religious schools?

If the court says vouchers are OK, the face of public education is in for a major remodeling. Bill Banach's scenario has several hidden messages.

The Editor

Suppose I decided to open a new school in your community. Rest assured that I'd use some aggressive marketing techniques. In fact, if I targeted your community for my next "Silver Bullet Academy," you could "bet the farm" that I'd be a fearsome competitor.

(But you'd also discover that you could—and should—be doing many of the things that I'd do. The highlights of my strategic marketing plan follow. As you read these highlights, ask yourself what you'd do if you learned that Silver Bullet Academy was coming to your community in September. Then ask yourself why you aren't doing some of those things now.)

First, We Collect Market Data

To begin, I'd conduct some market research in your community to develop a demographic, socioeconomic, and psychographic profile of the citizenry. The result would be a binder filled with nifty graphs and pie charts telling me things like this about the people in your community:

- The number of parent and nonparent households
- The number of preschool and school-age children
- Average length of residence in the community
- Occupational status of residents
- Income status of residents
- Political affiliations in the community
- The educational aspirations of parents and nonparents
- A history of school finance elections with yes-no results plotted by neighborhood.

Next, I'd do some research on one of your primary audiences—parents of school-age children. I'd determine what they like and don't like about your schools, and what programs and services they want, but can't get from you. My intent is to determine if I can develop some elements of a marketing strategy based on **your** strengths and weaknesses.

Armed with this analytical information, I'd prepare an advertising campaign announcing my arrival. I could

The Silver Bullet Academy

take the high ground and announce that my new Silver Bullet Academy would be a **safe and secure place** where a competent and experienced teaching staff delivers a comprehensive curriculum. Or - to take the lower ground—I could say the same thing and follow it with an **attack on the quality** of public education. Regardless of my approach, I'd try to position Silver Bullet Academy as an educational option that has advantages over the status quo. To do this I would make some promissory statements such as:

- Silver Bullet Academy students will learn everything they need to know in a safe, well-disciplined environment, and/or
- Silver Bullet Academy will be staffed by competent and caring professionals who know and respect every child, and/or
- Silver Bullet Academy students will have access to a full range of learning resources, including the latest computer technologies.

My market analysis would identify the attention-getting promises to use in your community.

Next, We Conduct an Awareness Campaign

My advertising campaign would feature print ads in local newspapers, radio and TV commercials, and direct mail. Within the context of a mass marketing program, I'd target specific mailings to audiences ranging from community influentials to parent opinion leaders.

The coordinated advertising campaign would culminate in a series of "See For Yourself" meetings that would be conducted in convenient locations across your community. People would

be greeted at the door and given a brochure describing Silver Bullet Academy and its vision. The presentation would focus on the safe environment, the competent staff, the comprehensiveness of the curriculum, and the integration of technology. It would be a slick, well rehearsed, colorful presentation featuring...children!

I'd tell those attending that people usually have a few questions after hearing about Silver Bullet Academy. I'd tell people what the three or four most frequently asked questions are, and then I'd give some well rehearsed answers to each of them. Then I'd ask if there were other questions. As people leave the meeting, I'd give them a postage-paid question card, and invite them to call or mail any questions that occur to them after the meeting.

But I wouldn't wait for people to call me. I'd make some calls myself, starting with those who signed the registration card at the informational meetings. (Business people call these folks "hot prospects.") Actually, I'd employ teachers to make these calls. And, so, if you attended the informational meeting and had a fourth grade youngster, **you would receive a call** from an elementary-level teacher asking if you wanted any more information about Silver Bullet Academy.

Then I'd move to those parents in the community who did not attend the informational meetings. Before making those calls, however, I'd do a media blitz pointing out the high level of interest in Silver Bullet Academy and the standing-room-only crowds drawn to the informational meetings.

As I prepared to open my school, I'd engage parents in a review of the Silver Bullet Academy's vision, and talk with them about the staff's hopes and aspi-

rations for the students.

Next I'd provide an overview of the curriculum and ask parents to identify the hopes, fears, and priorities they have for their children. And, finally, I'd have parents meet with their child's teachers for a discussion of the learning objectives for the various grade levels. (At these grade-level meetings every teacher would provide parents with a vita, a summary of the classroom curriculum for the year, and an invitation to be a partner in the educational process. Parents also would be provided with the teacher's school and personal telephone numbers, and a sincere invitation to call at any reasonable hour.)

Priority Is Given to Communication

To keep communication flowing, Silver Bullet Academy would have a well-written newsletter, a web page, and periodic "open letters" from the principal. These items would be designed to reinforce the vision of the school, the competence of the staff, the success of the students, and to provide parents with information about a variety of educational topics and issues.

The staff would be the front line troops in my marketing campaign. Each member of the staff would under-

stand how to be an ambassador for the school, and each member of the staff would have **customer relations** as an important part of his job description.

Each week, every teacher would send home a parent letter, a brief student progress report, and all student work. The parent letter would explain what happened during the week, the learning objectives that were addressed, and how the student work related to those objectives. The parent letter would also outline the learning objectives to be addressed during the next week. (I'd send these items home on Monday. Parents are pooped on Friday.)

My principal and teachers each would make a "courtesy" phone call to one parent every day. The purpose of the call would be to say something positive.

The principal would have "communication debriefing" as a standing item on each monthly staff meeting agenda to celebrate communication successes and anticipate communication opportunities. Staff members would hear the results of various feedback vehicles employed during the month and, at mid-year, the results of the annual "customer satisfaction" survey. The debriefings would reinforce

At Silver Bullet Academy, we

- Collect market research
- Learn what people want
- Conduct an awareness campaign
- Talk to people, one-on-one
- Report pupil progress to parents each week
- Seek out the best for students
- Make sure we build a solid constituency support base

At Silver Bullet Academy, each student's progress is now reported weekly, teachers telephone parents regularly, and parents can use the Internet at any time to access information related to their child's learning objectives and classroom activities.

Silver Bullet Academy's "no surprises" approach to communication.

Parents and other citizens would be welcome to visit Silver Bullet Academy at any time, and the hallways and display cases would feature student work.

The sign on the front door of the school would welcome people and direct them to the office. The office would have a pleasant waiting room, and a combination secretarial "reception station" would replace the check-in counter so that students and visitors could state their business with some degree of privacy.

Old-Style Parent Conferences Are Eliminated

Parent conferences would be eliminated because they have become obsolete. There is no need for parents to come to school twice a year to hear about their child's progress. At Silver Bullet Academy, each student's progress is now reported weekly, teachers telephone parents regularly, and parents can use the Internet at any time to access information related to their child's learning objectives and classroom activities.

Parent conferences would be replaced by quarterly, school-wide "Learning Celebrations." These late afternoon and early evening celebrations would feature student work and provide opportunities for staff, parents,

and students to converse. The celebrations would feature music, the arts, and an ongoing infomercial about the school curriculum and student achievement. Parents and students who attend the celebrations would receive gold star pins, certificates, and bumper stickers proclaiming, "Education is Golden at Silver Bullet Academy!"

The staff training schedule would be published in a Silver Bullet Academy calendar at the beginning of the school year. Parents would receive reminders two weeks before each training session that affected their child's schedule. These reminders also would describe the type of training, why teachers would receive it, and the potential payoff of the training for students. When students returned to class after time off for teacher training, the teacher would explain the nature of the training and how it might be used in the classroom.

We Seek the Best for Students

To address its vision (Developing successful students who will be able to effectively assume a variety of adult roles and responsibilities), the staff at Silver Bullet Academy will create and maintain a variety of educational partnerships with businesses and governmental agencies, both locally and, electronically, around the world.

The staff at Silver Bullet Academy will seek out the best educational prac-

tices—from all sources, public and private—and adapt them for use by Silver Bullet Academy students. Technology will be integrated into the curriculum. Time will be provided so teachers can talk with their colleagues and think about better ways of doing things.

The traditional school year will close with an annual report informing parents and community members of progress toward goals and objectives set at the beginning of the school year.

The closing of the traditional year would also serve as the kickoff of a self-supporting summer enrichment session for all that choose to attend. This session would feature a series of week-long "camps" to reinforce and expand upon what children have learned. Multi-age groupings would be established in specialty areas to help students demonstrate and develop their leadership skills. And, as is the case during the school year, all school district learning resources would be available. Students, for example, would be able to check out laptop computers to access the school district's library and a variety of educational resource banks.

Welcome to the New World at Silver Bullet Academy.

Conclusion

If all this seems like a lot of work, please understand that this strategic marketing plan outlines just some of the things that I'd do to develop successful students and build a constituency for Silver Bullet Academy. (We haven't even discussed incentives, rewards, alumni groups, volunteers, adult tutors, on-site day care services, future student associations, grandparent programs, the graphic presence of Silver Bullet Academy, and a host of other constituency-building activities.)

No doubt, some school staffs are already implementing a plan similar to the one outlined above. As a result, they should have little difficulty developing and maintaining a vibrant educational program in today's competitive, market-driven environment.

Conversely, many schools do not have a vision. Many leaders do not expect their staffs to be involved in marketing activities. Many school officials and do not address the needs and wants of their constituents. As a result, they are destined to see reductions in their customer and financial base. Eventually the level of community support and the quality of their program will deteriorate, and, ultimately, they may find themselves out of business.

What's interesting here is that there is nothing new about Silver Bullet Academy. It's a school with a decent staff, a good curriculum, and people who are continually trying to do better. In many ways, Silver Bullet Academy is just like your school. (After all, there are no silver bullets!)

What is different is that the people at Silver Bullet Academy use planning and marketing to systematically build a constituency—a constituency that will become a foundation for effective teaching and learning, and improved educational opportunities for all students. Before Silver Bullet Academy comes to your town, perhaps some of the practices discussed here should be considered.

Dr. William J. Banach is CEO of Banach, Banach & Cassidy, Inc. (69050 Hartway Road, Ray Township, MI 48096-1433) and executive director of The Institute for Future Studies. Reproduction of this article and distribution to your peers is encouraged...before Silver Bullet Academy comes to your town.

Financial Support for Students

Dollars for Scholars Programs Help Raise Achievement Expectations and Funds for Scholarships

by William C. Nelsen

Raising expectations is the most powerful force for improving educational achievement today. That belief is what citizens in more than 800 communities are counting on and working for. These citizens are all part of a growing national movement, operating under the trademark of **Dollars for Scholars** in 39 states. Their focus is to encourage local students to do well in high school, to challenge them to pursue postsecondary education, and then to give them extra financial support to help them achieve that goal.

In the small Minnesota town of Parkers Prairie, a retired hardware store manager returned to his hometown to challenge his friends to start a Dollars for Scholars chapter. They did. Then he challenged community residents and school alumni to undertake active fund raising through a "P-547 Club," so named because of the number for the local school district. People were challenged to pledge

\$547 for the scholarship program. And they did! Over the past five years the local scholarship chapter has raised over \$400,000. A student growing up in Parkers Prairie gets the message: "You are expected to do well in high school and prepare for college or vocational school. And the community is committed to helping you get there."

Educators, business leaders, government officials, are all looking for solutions to the problems in our schools. All sorts of strategies have been proposed, and in a few instances are being tried—changes in curriculum and teaching, merit pay systems, "schools within schools," greater choices for parents as to where to send their kids to school and others.

These school reforms will likely be very useful in specific settings. But many educational experts agree that none measures up to one crucial ingredient for success in every community



To raise scholarship funds, the Dollars for Scholars chapter in Fall River, MA, created a 3/4 mile long "Pathway To Education" string of dollars from Durfee High School to Bristol Community College. Volunteers of all ages, including Kheary Reth, 13, helped carry the string of dollars.

and school. That is the raising of educational expectations. Frank Newman, President of the Education Commission of the States, has stressed that above all, "there must be higher expectations. A large and growing body of evidence supports the concept that students will largely achieve as much as we expect of them."

Several years ago the late James Coleman of the University of Chicago completed a major study of public and parochial schools throughout the United States to learn where student achievement was the highest? The best results were took place in those schools where the people in the community (or the surrounding parish in the case of parochial schools) set high expecta-

tions and provided support and encouragement.

To raise educational expectations, various avenues are open to local citizens: participating actively in parent-teacher associations, asking key questions about academic standards at community forums, attending parent-teacher conferences for our children at school, and volunteering to participate in school-community academic support groups.

But nothing is more effective than when people in a local community organize themselves to encourage and reward students for their past achievements and their future promise. These are the goals of the Dollars for Scholars program. Local Dollars for Scholars

Dollars for Scholars

organizations are created, developed, and sustained by Citizens' Scholarship Foundation of America known as CSFA, the nation's largest nonprofit scholarship and educational support organization.

The first Dollars for Scholars chapter was founded in the late 1950s in Fall River, Massachusetts, by local optometrist, Dr. Irving Fradkin. In recent years the program has begun to grow fairly rapidly with over one-half of the 800 Dollars for Scholars chapters being formed in the last six years. Every week a new chapter is being formed somewhere in the nation.

How Does the Program Work?

Dollars for Scholars chapters are local nonprofit scholarship foundations affiliated with CSFA. They can be and have been formed in any type of community setting—small

rural towns, suburban school districts, inner city neighborhoods. The program is usually initiated by several local lead-

ers who recruit a variety of people (parents, businesspeople, teachers, service club representatives, retirees, administrators, students) to form a steering committee, usually with help from CSFA. If the steering committee members says, "Let's go for it," the group applies to CSFA for a charter. After the charter is created and the local board and committee structures are organized, volunteers begin to publicize the program, initiate various academic support activities, build scholarship dollars through a variety of grass roots fundraising events, and then distribute these funds on an equitable, competitive basis to assist local students. Currently local Dollars for Scholars chapters raise and distribute from

under \$5000 to \$250,000 per year, depending on the size and age of the chapter.

Procedures for a Group to Affiliate with CSFA

1. Contact the national office for affiliation forms.
2. Pay a one-time \$100 affiliation fee. (Annual recertification fee of \$100 maintains affiliation.) The chapter has no other financial obligations to CSFA.
3. Complete Community Profile, Chapter Agreement, and Application for Charter.
4. Submit affiliation fee, Chapter Agreement, Application for Charter, and Community Profile to Dollars for Scholars. Submit Chapter Bylaws within 60 days of affiliation.
5. Complete and submit year-end chapter reports annually to CSFA. These reports include the chapter's Financial Report and Recipient List. The reports must be submitted before the affiliate may participate in the foundation's programs and services.

The national office is located at 1505 Riverview Rd., St. Peter, Minnesota. The Dollars for Scholars information number is 800-248-8080, or website www.citizens.scholarship-foundation.org.



Dr. William C. Nelsen, president of CSFA, greets Gen. Colin Powell, chairman of America's Promise-The Alliance for Youth. In describing CSFA, Gen. Powell has said, "CSFA is an important part of my work with America's Promise. At America's Promise-The Alliance for Youth, we have made promises to our young people. And we are creating alliances to make sure those promises come true. No alliance is more important to me than the alliance between America's Promise and CSFA."

Why Has the Program Been Successful?

Five reasons emerge from the experiences of communities involved in the program to raise expectations.

1. The Dollars for Scholars program is a local program run by local people for their local students. Kids tend to be influenced most significantly by people and events close to them. The community of Wakefield, Massachusetts, last year gave out \$250,000 in scholarships to help local students attend colleges or vocational

schools. You can imagine the expectations for students there to finish high school and pursue postsecondary education.

2. The program fosters a real sense of accountability among students. John E. Bierwirth, former superintendent of schools, Portland, Oregon, summarizes the value of community scholarships in these words: "While all financial aid ultimately comes from the people, Dollars for Scholars programs bring it closer to home for both the giver and the receiver. State and federal aid programs are worthwhile, but they are so distant and impersonal that neither the giver (the taxpayer) nor the receiver (the student) feel any attachment to each other or to the mission of the aid program." A student can

feel a much greater sense of responsibility to do well in college knowing that the scholarship money comes from friends, teachers, neighbors, and others very close to home.

3. The program is highly visible and tangible. Last year on Make A Difference Day (held on the fourth Saturday in October), the Fall River, Massachusetts, chapter challenged citizens throughout the community to each give a dollar for scholarship support for local students. To make this challenge visible, they taped

Dollars for Scholars

- Citizens' Scholarship Foundation of America is the nation's largest private sector scholarship and educational support organization.
- Since it was founded in 1958, CSFA has distributed, through its three programs, over \$470 million to more than 492,000 students.
- In fiscal year 1998, CSFA distributed \$81.8 million to nearly 80,000 students.

MISSION STATEMENT

CSFA's mission is to expand **ACCESS** to educational opportunities by **involving and assisting** communities, corporations, foundations, organizations and individuals in their **SUPPORT** of students and in **ENCOURAGING** their educational achievement.



CSFA accomplishes its mission through three distinct programs:



COMMUNITY BASED

- A national volunteer network of nearly 800 grassroots scholarship foundations in 38 states and the District of Columbia.
- Chapters raise funds and provide financial and academic support to students in the local area. In 1997, local chapters raised over \$24.1 million and awarded \$11.8 million in scholarships to 24,000 students.



CORPORATE BASED

- The nation's largest designer and manager of scholarship and other educational assistance programs.
- Most programs provide scholarships to children of employees of the sponsoring business. In 1998, Scholarship Management Services distributed \$70 million through 724 sponsored programs to over 61,500 students.



PARTNERSHIP BASED

- A curriculum and resource center designed to motivate and prepare students for postsecondary education.
- Students use the innovative curriculum, resource library and computer programs to inventory their own personal and academic assets, pursue service learning opportunities, and explore career options. More than 60 sites are serving diverse communities in 20 states.

visit our website <http://citizens.scholarship-foundation.org>



CITIZENS' SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION OF AMERICA

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 E-mail: info@csfa.org
 Website: <http://citizens.scholarship-foundation.org>

CSFA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. All contributions are tax-deductible. For more information, contact your local chapter or the national office.

dollar bills together to stretch over one-third mile from the city high school to the nearest postsecondary educational institution. The event raised \$12,000. Most important, local youth witnessed in a highly visible way that the people in the community cared about them and about their education.

4. The program is a way for people in a community to empower themselves to act. For example, in San Diego, educators and community residents started a chapter to benefit students who graduate from the San Diego Court Schools, an alternative system for youth who have problems in the regular system or become wards of

the court. Youth have been rescued from hopelessness, gangs, and drugs because the people in the community took action to help them finish high school and go on to gain a postsecondary education.

5. The Dollars for Scholars program can change the educational atmosphere of a community when local volunteers work hard to raise funds and set up personal academic support activities for both junior high and high school students. More than 200 chapters have active programs of tutoring, mentoring, and running workshops for parents concerning college preparation expectations. Some chapters have started "ScholarShops," CSFA's newest program designed to

challenge, assist, and prepare youth for post-secondary education. The message of these activities is clear: "Education is valued in this community!"

The Dollars for Scholars program is growing, thanks to the responses of volunteers and to the support of foundations, corporations, and state government. In pursuit of its vision to reach communities throughout the nation, CSFA

is establishing state and regional organizations, and has given them the power to charter new chapters in their territories. Such organizations have been formed in New England, Georgia, Minnesota, Iowa, Washington, and Southern California, and will be soon in Indiana, New York, North Dakota, and Florida.

The value of this growing program was summed up extremely well by a girl interviewed recently on a Waterloo, Iowa, television station. She was asked: "What did the Dollars for Scholars award mean to you?" She replied, "Although I've received larger scholarships from the college and elsewhere, this Dollars for Scholars award means the most to me because it's a vote of confidence that's been placed in me by my neighbors. I'm not about to



Appearing in the Pop Jubilee Parade has helped the Laurens County Education Fund, a Dollars for Scholars chapter in Laurens, SC, gain community-wide recognition. The chapter prepared the float with the help of chapter volunteers, students, and parents of students.

let them down."

William C. Nelsen is president and CEO of the Citizens' Scholarship Foundation of America. CSFA is the non-profit parent organization for the Dollars for Scholars program. In 1998, *Smart Money* magazine ranked CSFA as the top nonprofit organization in the education category. In the 1998 fiscal year, CSFA programs reported more than \$81 million to 85,600 students. Dollars for Scholars, ScholarShop and Scholarship Management Services are registered trademarks of CSFA.

Photos courtesy Citizens' Scholarship Foundation of America.

Research Report

Who's Responsible for Induction of Principals?

By Ann Griffin

Head in a meeting in the office of the Superintendent, July 8.

"Congratulations, Mrs. Sanderson, and welcome to Merryville Independent School District. We are so pleased that you are joining our administrative team as the new principal of William Merry Junior High.

"I realize this is your first principalship and that you have some really big shoes to fill, in following Mr. Whiteside. He was principal at William Merry for 14 years when he retired in May. By the way, the Board was very excited that we were hiring someone with fresh ideas and the kind of curriculum experience that we could count on to help us get those assessment scores up. Great as Mr. Whiteside was, he just couldn't seem to make it happen where the state academic skills test were concerned.

"Speaking of Mr. Whiteside, he believed that, with this being your first year as principal, you would want to have some input in developing your budget and hiring your team. He left last year's financial and personnel reports, along with the work papers to develop your new budget with your secretary. She will be able to help you find everything you need to get that together. Personnel will let you know how many positions you have to fill

and will work with you on applicants and interviews. You still have another month and a half before school actually begins, but you might want to get on that right away, as those good candidates won't wait forever.

"You don't need to worry about the new teachers' training, though. The personnel staff does a bang-up job with our new teacher orientation and then they carry the induction process for those teachers throughout the entire school year.

"Now, all this may seem a little overwhelming, but I am confident that you can handle it. Do you have any questions?" smiled Supt. Overman.

Principal Sanderson thought briefly and then replied, "Well yes, I do have a few questions, Mr. Overman. What about MY induction program? What about a mentor, whom will I look to for answers regarding district regulations and requirements, and budget guidelines, etc.? Don't I get some sort of staff orientation as a new principal?"

Each year thousands of men and women enter the doors of schools not as teachers, but as principals (and instructional leaders, and headmasters). Even more important, many of these thousands of men and women enter as principals either new to the position, or

new to a particular school. The question is, have these new executives been fully oriented and prepared for the challenges of their position? And, who should be in charge of their induction?

According to Parkay and Hall¹, more study and research has been done on the induction of teachers than on the induction of principals. However they purport that "the more we learn today from novice principals about how to meet the challenges of beginning leadership, the better off tomorrow's schools, students, and new principals will be." Anderson² suggests that, although thousands of individuals enter the principalship each year, little educational research exists regarding induction strategies and entry-year needs of beginning principals. Anderson further suggests that, given the importance of the principal's leadership role and the critical element of the first days and months in the process of shaping school leaders, a clear need exists to begin addressing the induction year of the principal³. After all, principals regardless of experience have very similar needs as they enter the principalship, either for the first time ever or for the first time in a

new school or new district⁵.

If the principal is the most important ingredient in the success or failure of a school, as purported by Daresh⁴, and if the overall success of a principal is decided in the first year or two in the position², why would school boards and CEOs neglect the very thing—an induction program—that could ensure the success of both their new principals and their schools? Is the neglect a question of responsibility? If so, who then is responsible for inducing principals?

The purpose of this article is to attempt an unraveling of the responsibility for the induction or "bringing about" of the principal. The author poses the question: If a principal, as the leader on a campus, is responsible for the induction of new teachers to that campus, would it not be the superintendent, as leader of leaders, who would be responsible for the induction of new principals to the district?

Method of the Study

The author used as a basis for this article personal interviews with nine superintendents in school districts



throughout Texas. The school districts ranged in size from a 3-A classification, representing small districts, to 5-A, which is representative of the largest districts in the state. Of the nine sample districts interviewed, three were 3-A, three were 4-A, and three were 5-A. The sample included both rural and suburban districts, and both male and female superintendents. Questions asked of the superintendents focused primarily on three aspects of the induction program for new principals? 1, Is there truly a need for an induction program for new principals? 2, What did the superintendent believe was his/her role in the induction of new principals? 3, Why are induction programs for principals so neglected while teacher induction programs flourish?

Findings of the Study

Q. Is there a need for an induction program for new principals?

- Overall, the consensus of the superintendents was that an induction program for new principals was definitely needed.

- All nine of the superintendents expressed a need for some sort of induction program regardless of the experience level of the principal. However, four of the nine superintendents said that the formality of the program might be lessened with regard to experience level, especially with those principals changing positions within the same district.

- At the present time, no induction programs are in place in any of the interviewee's districts. At least three of the superintendents had held informal "academies" for new and would-be

principals (e.g. intern teachers currently working toward principal certification) at one time or another in their district.

- In the discussion of the need for induction programs, at least four of the nine respondents mentioned "growing our own" principals, assistant principals and interns through the informal academies.

- The superintendents said that their local academy would offer a ready supply of candidates each year for new positions in the district caused by attrition and growth. The interns would become assistant principals, the assistant principals would become principals, and the principals would take on more difficult principalships or become directors or assistant superintendents.

- Two of the four superintendents are working on developing such academies.

Actual comments of the superintendents:

"I feel that an induction year program for new principals is vital."

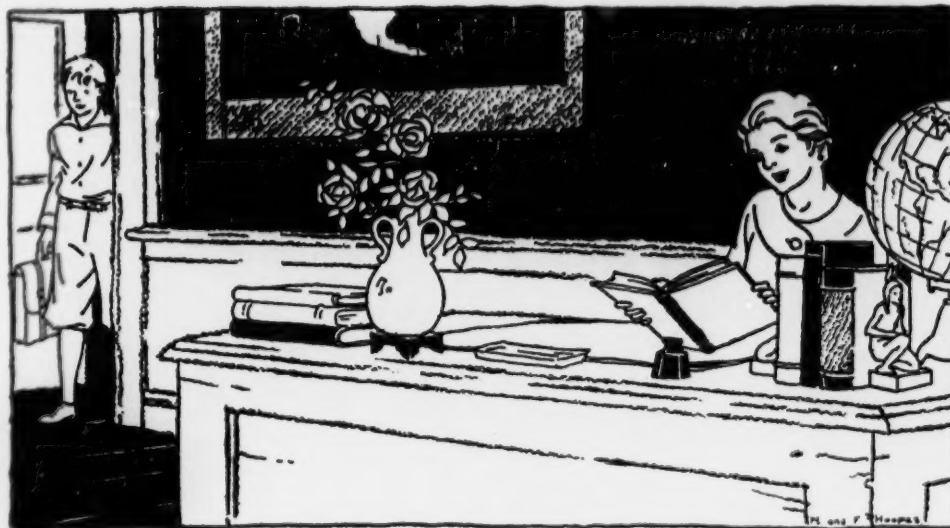
"I have mixed feelings about an induction program for new principals. To me, it depends on the individual. Some people would benefit, but others would find it a waste of time."

"Even the best selection process will yield new principals who will need personalized training and monitoring for the first year or so."

"Some type of induction system is needed, even for an experienced person. Certainly, such [an induction program] can be less formal for one with more experience."

"I would like to see a quality training program in our district to 'grow our own'."

"Districts should design and operate a formal academy for this purpose."



Q. As a leader of leaders in your district, what do you believe is the superintendent's role in the induction of new principals?"

- Each respondent said that the superintendent should play a key role in the induction of new principals. However, there was no clear consensus as to what that key role should be.

- Four of the nine superintendents said that their role should be an active one (i.e., act as mentor or direct supervisor). The other five said that the active role should be delegated to an assistant superintendent or personnel director.

- Surprisingly, delegation was not a consideration in all the larger districts; only one of the three 5-A district superintendent's said that the most active role in the induction of principals should be delegated. In addition, only one of the five superintendents who favored delegation did so to someone other than an assistant superintendent.

- The interviews also revealed that

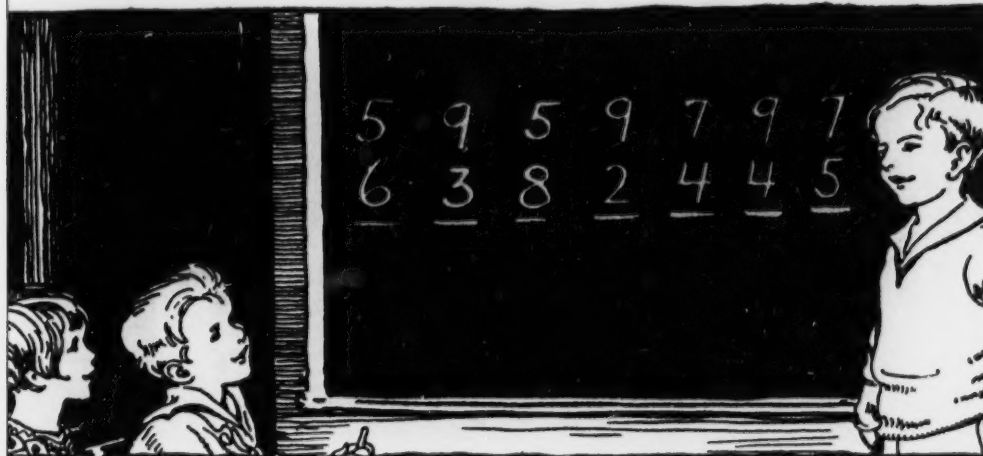
the majority of superintendents (seven of nine) believe that the entire administrative team should take part in the overall development of the principal.

- Further, they agreed that one of the primary roles of the superintendent should be in ensuring that an induction program is in place and that new principals were getting the training and information necessary for a successful principalship.

- Only three of the nine superintendents stated that the induction of principals was the primary responsibility of the superintendent, while two of the three even went so far as to describe the induction of new principals in their district as an extension of the superintendency.

Superintendent comments:

"I think the superintendent should take a key role in the induction of new principals. While members of the administrative team can participate in training sessions, serve as mentors, and provide advice and consent, it is the superintendent who should take the



lead role."

"I view the role of the superintendent as the organizer of the induction program—playing a larger role in small districts, but leaving it more to the administrative team in smaller ones."

"The superintendent has three roles: 1, to serve the board of trustees; 2, to be the role model or icon of the school district; and 3, to make the tough decisions for the district that no one else can make. The key role in an induction program for principals then, must go to a director, as the superintendent and assistant superintendents do not have the time."

Q. Why are induction programs for principals so neglected while teacher induction programs flourish?

- One primary response was given for this question—lack of funding.
- Five of the six superintendents in the small to medium districts (3-A & 4-A) stated that the few number of new

principals needed in their district in a given year could result in a one-on-one program. On the other hand, new teacher needs for induction were always high, making it easier to justify funding the teacher programs.

- The consensus seemed to be that even though the need for an induction program for principals was evident, needed, and wanted, other needs took priority when it finally comes down to dollars and cents.

Conclusion

Based on the data collected, this author concludes that the induction of school principals, regardless of the importance of the role, will continue to be left to chance so long as school boards and school superintendents place higher priority on things other than the induction of their instructional leaders.

Current trends and predictions indicate that 65 percent of today's school principals will leave the profession within the next two to three years, tremendously increasing the number of

new entrants to the profession. Without proper induction programs the chance of success during the first year is decreased drastically, leading to possible disenchantment with the position and therefore an even greater attrition rate.

If the principal is considered to be the major factor in the success or failure of our schools and that the overall success of the principal is determined by the first few weeks and months on the job, should school boards and CEOs continue to leave that success to chance?

Although it is true that much of the direction for the induction of new principals can come from the central office, it cannot be left to assistants and directors alone. The superintendent's personal commitment to it is essential.

Less clear is how directly the superintendent should be involved in the mentoring process. Mentoring is a powerful, yet delicate and elusive activity that must take its shape from the personalities involved and the situation in which it operates⁶.

Whether or not the superintendent is personally involved in the daily activities of a principal's induction must be decided upon factors of an individual school context. But, the dedication of the superintendent to the principal's induction, and that person's subsequent success, is not an option.

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Ann Griffin is in her third year of her first principalship at Decker Prairie Elementary (27427 Decker Prairie-Rosehill Rd., Magnolia, Texas 77355). While her district did not then have an induction program for principals, the staff is now developing an academy for prospective administrators.

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Should students be taught to become fine citizens or to learn corporate work ethics?

Just What Are the Purposes of Public Education?

by Jessica C. Billings

We now have corporate leaders telling school leaders how to mind the "education" business. After all, during most of the '80s and '90s, the stock market soared—while the "stock" of public education plummeted.

Leading lights of business, from Lee Iacocca to Bill Gates, have become American heroes, while educators have been lambasted as failures, bozos and a great amorphous blob.

So school officials and boards have adopted business metaphors and methods. They asked business leaders to define their goals (after all, parents want their students to be eligible for the gold rush). And they rushed into partnerships with business.

But, it is inevitable that there would be a backlash, and careful observers can see dissension sprouting. From Jonathan Kozol's impassioned pleas to allow children their childhood to those who question the motives of business, voices in education are questioning the new business/school connection.

Writing in *Phi Delta Kappan* (October, 1997), Clinton E. Boutwell argues that, at the same time it is demanding a highly-skilled workforce, corporate America is—by design—reduc-

ing the number and quality of jobs available.

Why? Asks Boutwell:

"Could it be that building a large labor pool from which to select applicants—that is, a large supply of workers—is part of corporate America's plan? After all, by the rules of supply and demand, one way to keep wages and incomes low is to have a huge supply of highly educated workers, but a small demand for their services. That way, businesses can get the pick of the litter pretty cheap and can scrap the rest."

That sounds a little on the paranoid side, but Boutwell offers persuasive reasoning to back up his question. He observes that from 1947 through 1979 a "tacit compact" had ensured better job security, wages, and fair prices for most American workers and consumers. Step by step, he says, corporations have been dismantling that compact, by shipping jobs to foreign countries, slashing wages and laying off workers, and "relentlessly" applying technology in the workplace to replace or de-skill workers.

Graduate to No Jobs?

The net result, he argues, is that universities continue to produce many high-quality professional graduates, who compete for far too few jobs, and end up taking jobs for which they are severely overqualified. Students with degrees from high-powered business schools such as MIT's Sloan School of Management, Northwestern's Kellogg School, and Stanford University—degrees that once virtually guaranteed an excellent job—remain unemployed.

"Millions of American college and high school students are being prepared for high-performance jobs that may never exist," says Boutwell.

"Unless there is a fundamental change in policy, millions of American high school and university graduates will be unable to find decent, challenging, well-paid work. This problem is due in large measure to the American education system's misguided commitment to producing world-class graduates without a commitment from corporate America to make a sufficient number of high-quality jobs available."

Certainly, a look at job projections for the year 2005, from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, shows that job-seekers in that year will be either high-tech or

low-wage. The 10 fastest growing occupations include computer engineers, systems analysts, and electronic pagination systems workers. The other seven are personal and home care aides, home health aides, physical and corrective therapy assistants, occupational therapy assistants, physical therapists, residential counselors and human services workers—all generally low-paid occupations.

In Illinois, average job openings in selected fields each year through 2005 will be:

Economists, 160.
Physicians, 610.
Education administrators, 660.
Lawyers, 760.
Farm workers, 1,000.
Machinists, 510.
Electricians, 590.*

It doesn't take very many schools to turn out graduates in those numbers.

Corporate Control...A Disaster

Writing in the independent newspaper, *Rethinking School*, Gerald W. Bracey says that "increasing corporate control

*(Figures from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Find these and a wealth of other statistics at <http://www.bls.gov/>)

Possible Purposes of Schools, the Year 2001

Prepare Youngsters to:

Traditional

- Become fine citizens. ☞
- Communicate clearly. ☞
- Work well with others. ☞
- Solve problems. ☞

Or

- Learn corporate work ethics.
- Follow orders.
- Be prepared to serve corporate needs.
- Perform in the worker-consumer role allowed them.

What is the Purpose of Higher Education?

“Millions of American college and high school students are being prepared for high performance jobs that may never exist.”

of education...is a disaster in the making for schools.”

Bracey quotes an employer, the chairman of the board of Circuit City: “In hiring new employees for our stores and warehouses, Circuit City is looking for people who are able to provide very high levels of customer service, who are honest, and who have a positive, enthusiastic, achievement-oriented work ethic.” Bracey goes on to say that “to people possessing these qualities, Circuit City offers its warehouse staff the minimum wage of \$4.25 an hour while sales staff work strictly on commission.”

Bracey, who made his reputation challenging school critics, believes that schools “should not be preparing students for the world of work. That they are reveals a massive triumph of propaganda and conditioning...We used to make fun of the Soviet Union and its ‘glorious worker’ propaganda. But we glorify the concept of work just as propagandistically—just more subtly and more successfully...”

What Are Schools’ Functions?

If schools should not be preparing students for work, what should they be doing? Bracey suggests:

- A renewed emphasis on **education for citizenship**. Bracey notes that “Thomas Jefferson saw education as the means of protecting us from our government...” and suggests returning to

that principle.

- A truly **liberal** education that prepares children “to **live rich, generous lives** in the hours that they are free from work.”

The federal School-to-Work initiative, generally lauded in the education community, has a small but vocal opposition. Indeed, some groups have proclaimed the initiative “a Marxist plot.”

What Are Corporate Goals?

More thoughtful are the comments of Mary Ellen Cardella, an inner-city high school teacher writing in *Z Magazine*, an electronic publication. Says Cardella:

“If—as the oft quoted Thomas Jefferson and John Dewey maintain—democracy resides in a well informed electorate, then a system of public education rooted in the goals and behaviors of corporate America promises an electorate, a body politic, tooled to serve the narrow interest of the corporate model at the expense of a society of the people.”

If the School-to-Work program “is about work, then why does its education agenda come from corporate goals for schooling and not from working people’s goals for schooling? This partnership between corporate America, the government and public education presumes that working people have no goals or ideas about work other than to perform in the worker-consumer role allowed them. Is their worker-con-

sumer role a democratic ideal for public education in a free society?"

School-to-Work, says Cardella, does not (as some claim) "guarantee students work or economic security, but instead serves to instill in students a corporate dictated work ethic that equates civility with individual and social docility." (Her article, titled "School-to-Work, A Corporate Raid on Public Education," can be found at <http://www.lol.shareworld.com/zmag/articles/oct96cardella.htm>)

Should schools be preparing children to work? As with most philosophical questions in education, this one will be answered district by district, as each school board finds the balance that works for its own community. It remains to be seen how far the pendulum will swing in the anti-business direction: business, after all, still has the money, the power and the ear of government. And getting a job is still the preoccupation of most Americans.

What Skills Should be Taught?

Meanwhile, another question looms, and that is: What kind of work? You have heard before that the jobs that will be held by students now in school don't even exist yet, and that is undoubtedly true of jobs in the high-tech industries (which seems now to be where most of the high-paying jobs of the future will be found). David Thornburg, a leading voice in school technology, told school leaders at a conference in Chicago that "We must prepare children for **their** future—not **our** past."

Many of the so-called vocational skills that were valid a generation ago are useless now, he said. Rather than specific skills, Thornburg said, employ-

ers will be looking for communication skills, the ability to collaborate, and creative problem-solving ability.

Other pundits say that entrepreneurship is the wave of the future, and schools should be preparing students to be their own bosses. Still others point to research and information management skills as key for the coming century.

As we move, one step at a time, into the unfolding future, we might find some clues as to what students will need in these words from John Gardner:[♦]

"Life isn't a mountain that has a summit. Nor is it, as some suppose, a riddle that has an answer, nor a game that has a final score.

"Life is an endless unfolding and, if we wish it to be, and endless process of self-discovery, an endless and unpredictable dialogue between our own potentialities and the life situations in which we find ourselves. By 'potentialities' I mean not just success as the world measures success, but the full range of one's capacities for learning, sensing, wondering, understanding, loving, and aspiring."

[♦](Gardner, John W., "Self-Renewal," *The Futurist*, November-December 1996).

Jessica Billings is editor of the *Journal*, published bimonthly by the Illinois School Boards Association (430 E. Vine St., Springfield, IL 62703. 630-629-3778). Non-member subscription rate is \$18 US, \$20 foreign. This article appeared in a recent edition of the *ISBA Journal*.

The Role of Audio-Visual Media in Education in Nigeria

by Chris O. Okwudishu

Visits to primary and secondary schools in Nigeria reveal that, with the possible exception of the chalkboard, there are no educational media in the schools. Even the chalkboard, in many cases, is nothing more than a rectangular shape on the front wall of the classroom that bears some evidence of a not-too-successful attempt to coat it with charcoal. Add to this the fact that the wall is nothing but "standing loose soil" that comes down with each stroke of the chalk, and you begin to get a picture of the bad state of the schools.

If a school does not have usable chalkboards, it is easy to imagine what the situation is with regard to other more expensive forms of educational media. Very few schools have functional radio sets, and most of the schools have no functional television sets, no film or slide projectors, and no overhead projectors. It is little wonder then that education students look blank when the lecturer talks about overhead transparencies, or the overhead projector, or the slide projector. They have never seen those monsters!

What is responsible for this deplorable state of affairs? Is it a lack of appreciation of the important contribu-

tions that the media can, and have been known to make, to improvement in the quality and quantity of learning? Is it indifference on the part of teachers? Is it indifference on the part of the education department, the Ministry of Education or whatever agency or agencies that have responsibility for providing educational media in the schools?

As a contribution to the quest for an answer to the question of absence of educational media in our schools, this study was designed to survey a sample of our teachers to learn if they had a positive or negative perception of the role of audio-visual material in teaching of young people.

The teaching profession in Nigeria is made up of people who have professional teaching qualifications with degrees and the Nigeria Certificate of Education, and people who do not have such qualifications. The second interest for the study was to learn if people who have professional teaching qualifications would be more positively disposed to the use of media in instruction than those who do not have such qualifications. Having been exposed in their training to courses dealing with how people learn and under what circumstances, would such people be



These photos were taken in a secondary school in Nigeria. About the only media resource in this country's schools are chalkboards. A study by Dr. Okwudishu indicates that teachers have a positive view of the role of media in schools. They would like the Ministry of Education to provide radio, television sets, overhead projectors and film/slide projectors for use in classrooms.



more likely, than people who have not been so exposed, to appreciate the valuable contributions of the media to improvement in learning?

A third issue of interest in the study

were:

- To motivate students' interest in a subject, 71
- To extend the range of experience available to students, 66

was whether the gender of the teacher affects his or her perception of the role of media in education.

Information about the study

Subjects for the study were 71 secondary school teachers who were attending a seminar on instructional design organized by the Nigeria Department of Education.

Of the 71, 49 were male, 22 female; 41 had professional teaching qualifications and 30 did not.

Respondents were asked to give their reactions to sets of statements about audio-visual media as being **important, neutral or unimportant** (or not true). Survey instruments were coded so that results could be graded by respondents' professional training or sex.

Results

Statements rated as **important** and numbers of respondents

Add to this the fact that the wall is nothing but "standing loose soil" that comes down with each stroke of the chalk, and you begin to get a picture of the bad state of the schools.

- Media show great possibilities for stimulating teacher creativity, 65

- To provide different approaches for presenting materials, 62

- To reinforce materials taught in other lessons, 58

- To present new materials, 57

- To bring new resources and/or persons into the classroom, 49

- To present subject matter where there is not a special teacher (such as music), 46

Statements rated as **unimportant** (or not true) and number of respondents were:

- The use of media in instruction is a waste of time, 65

- Teachers use media as a way to cover up when they are unprepared for their lessons, 62

- Media eliminate the personal relationship between the teacher and student, 59

- Media, when used in the classroom, reduce the importance of the teacher, 57

- Modern media technologies are not suited to our educational system and their use should be discouraged, 56

- The contributions of the media to improvement in learning are overrated, 36

Respondents were asked, "Would you like to have a media specialist on the staff?" (68 yes, 3 no). "Would you be willing to attend a workshop/confer-

ence/seminar on educational media production and use? (69 yes, 2 no).

Findings

Results of this study provide justification for the following conclusions:

1. The majority of teachers in our secondary schools have a positive perception of the role of the media in education, and would like to have specialists on the staff and attend conferences on media production and use.

2. The teachers' perception of media does not vary significantly according to degree of teaching qualification or gender.

The implication of these findings is that the absence of educational media in our secondary schools cannot be attributed to teachers' lack of appreciation of the contributions that the media can make to improve learning nor any unwillingness on the part of teachers to use media.

It is, therefore, recommended that those who administer the schools should recognize that the media is an indispensable *resource* for the promotion of education within the school.

Dr. Chris Okwudishu is an associate of the Centre for Distance Learning, University of Abuja, (P.M.B. 195, Garki, Abuja, Nigeria).

PHOTO GALLERY: Geri Kody



*Gilbert's Observation:
The sure sign of a major crisis is
when no one tries to tell you
what to do.*

Cooperative Efforts in Education

Parents and Educators and Boards—Perfect Together—With Planning

by Diane Morris

As part of the Goals 2000 Educate America Act, the U.S. Congress adopted The National Education Goals.

Goal #8, which specifically addresses parental involvement states,

By the year 2000, every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children.

Studies show that a comprehensive instructional program with consistent involvement from parents and other influential adults improves learning.

Before you begin any parental involvement program, there are a few significant questions you may want to ask. Is your district using multiple strategies that focus on building community partnership? Do your schools use research practices to overcome challenges that exist in every community? Is your parental involvement program limited to membership in a PTA or PTO?

An effective parent involvement program begins with the board of education. Recognize that the board establishes the philosophy—from pretense to

practice—from telling parents their involvement is encouraged—to setting goals and objectives that carry out the philosophy of the board, staff and community. The returns are significant, as research clearly demonstrates;

- When parents are involved, students achieve more, regardless of their socioeconomic status, ethnic or racial background or the parents' educational level.

- When parents are involved, students have higher grades and test scores, better attendance and complete homework more consistently.

- When parents are involved, students exhibit more positive attitudes and behavior.

Consider these three steps to fulfill the goals of parent involvement.

1. How does your board policy include the parent involvement component?

Policies are those broad guidelines set by the school board to chart the district's course of action. Effective parental involvement programs work on a number of levels. Limiting your district to a general policy that simply states the board's philosophy in a few

sentences is not enough. Including a parental input component as part of the process rather than a statement of encouragement is a powerful mechanism to establish support and cooperation.

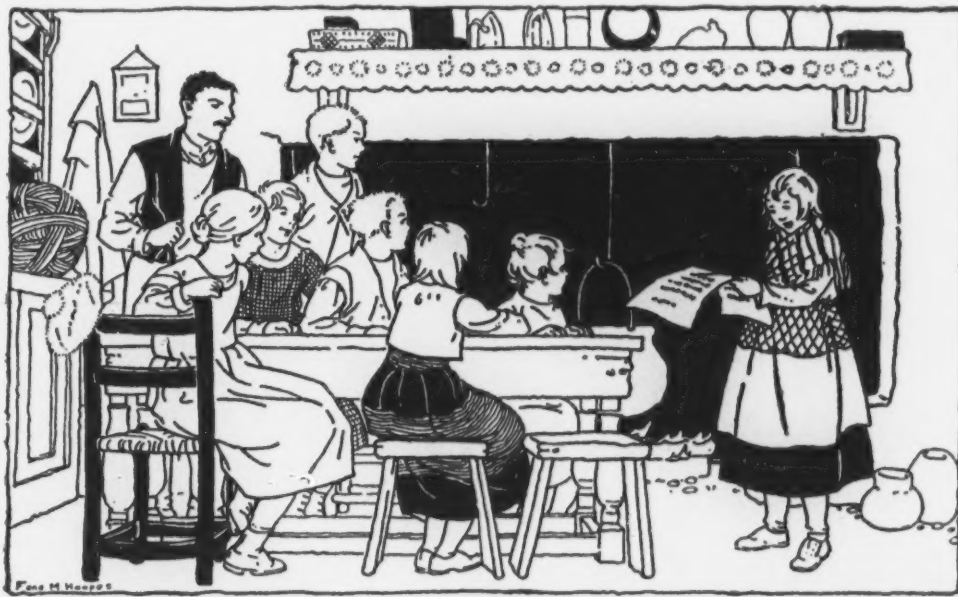
Let's focus on curriculum development as an example. The board's policy may implement opportunity for parental input prior to development and revision of all curricula. Including a parental involvement element promotes a greater level of understanding for parents and guarantees that curriculum changes are never a surprise.

Most teachers have no formal training in parental involvement. Including parent involvement training in your policy for new staff orientation can help teachers to understand the benefits of family involvement and help them develop strategies to involve families in new ways, including those parents who do not volunteer at school.

2. Does your board have a public/community relation committee?

Effective public relations is nothing more than communication designed to build relationships. Releasing information to the public that details every successful act is a good start. However, there must be a plan that develops effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications with all families each year.

School officials issue home bulletins to parents or a quarterly newsletter to the community. Take an opportunity to identify the groups of people in your district who would benefit from a consistent flow of communication. Parents, grandparents, senior citizens and government leaders can make contributions to the school. Regular parent/teacher dialogue should be encouraged at all grade levels. There are many options that increase communications, such as newsletters, staff meet-



Cooperative Efforts

ings, back-to school days, workshops, family learning, happy calls and teacher/parent communication forms. Communications serves as the foundation for all parental involvement activities.

Inviting staff to a board meeting to provide feedback on a new program demonstrates that you take the time to learn. It can also provide an opportunity for the public to learn and comment, adding an additional component of information. Effective public relations are based on helping good operations be understood in good times and bad.

3. What process is your district currently using for goal setting?

Identifying the process that is right for your district is the first step. Many boards choose the quick focus or the "family plan." This model is comprised of board members and the superintendent. While best suited for year-to-year planning, it's easy to learn and apply. However, parental involvement is limited and only the board and superintendent may feel ownership of the goals.

A board may expand itself to "in-house planning." This process includes administration with the board and superintendent. Although this process provides for more input, it still may be viewed as topdown goal setting.

Another approach is "campus team planning." Enlarging the circle to include principals and staff leaders reinforces the value of input from professionals but still lacks a parental involvement component. The board begins, however, to get a direct building and classroom focus and an increased understanding of issues.

Further expansion of the planning

team is "extended family planning." The team stretches itself and includes teacher and PTA representation to the campus team. Benefits at this level include an increase of available information, a wider range of ownership and a greater ability to market the plan. Planning at this level requires plenty of patience because of the time needed to complete the process.

The granddaddy of planning is "strategic planning." The extended family planning team expands to include all stakeholders and is comprised of 50 percent outsiders. This level ensures all views are included and weighed. This process takes four to five months to complete. The board's power is shared and careful management of time is critical.

For parent involvement to be purposeful, parents must be provided opportunities for timely and useful participation in the decision-making process on long-range district goals.

Diane Morris is a field service representative for the New Jersey School Boards Association (P.O. Box 909, Trenton, NJ 08605). This article appeared in a recent edition of the association's magazine *School Leader*.

PHOTO GALLERY: Geri Kody.....



*The educational system is
regarded simultaneously as the
nation's scapegoat and savior.*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Judith Groch

Book Reviews

By Albert E. Holliday, guest editor for this edition.

Ratings: One (only fair) to four stars (excellent).

Books for review and requests to serve as guest book reviewer (single or a group of books) can be sent to editor Arthur W. Steller, Superintendent, Kingston City Schools, 60 Crown St., Kingston, NY 12401

★★★★ School Administration Under Attack: What Are the Facts?

By Nancy Protheroe.

Educational Research Service, 2000 Clarendon Blvd, Arlington, VA 22201. 800-791-9308. \$14 plus \$3.50 for shipping. No purchase orders. 1998.

"Our school board hires too many administrators." "The salaries they receive are too high." "Administrators get in the way of good teachers."

Assertions such as these are common ones. ERS officials decided to publish objective information that readers can use to respond to such charges, and asked Nancy Protheroe, who has 20 years experience with ERS, to write it

She has collected research about elements of "effective" school operations from a variety of governmental and commercial publishers for her analysis of six of the most often cited criticisms about school administrators.

Among her conclusions:

- Assertive leadership by the school principal is the **key element** common to an effective school.
- School districts function with **fewer** managers than are found in business and industry.
- Charges that the number of school

administrators has been increasing are not justified—the ratio of students to district central office staff has been constant for more than 10 years.

• The average salary of superintendents is about 97 percent more than teachers, while the days on duty are 241 for them and 187 for teachers or \$424 per day for superintendents and \$215 for teachers.

Author Protheroe has data on other assertions as well. She does write that while all six represent misperceptions about public education, they are often repeated and divert attention from real educational issues and concerns.

Rating: Four stars for all superintendents and communication specialists.

★★★★ How to Deal with Parents Who are Angry, Troubled, Afraid or Just Plain Crazy

Elaine K. McEwan.

Corwin Press. \$18.95. 1998.

Yes, some parents need special handling. The odds are, you'll encounter a "crazy" one day and Elaine says: Be prepared. Know school board policies and legal rights of parents and children. Always keep notes of difficult encounters with parents in case there is a next, or worse one. Gather information about the problem-parent and even consult with a mental health professional, she urges. Keep superiors informed if an incident has happened. Call for police to be available when a conference is scheduled with a potentially dangerous parent, and have a witness on hand to help diffuse a difficult situation.

A third of her book is devoted to how one can tell if a "school"—meaning

the staff, students, parents—is “sick” and how to make it well. A principal needs to recognize clandestine operations, faultfinding, backyard gossip, lies and half-truths, and a whole dozen school sicknesses. Her 16 indicators of health and five descriptors or signs are specific and useful for a leader or team of staff members to pin down what might ail the school. And she describes what can be done to promote and maintain a healthy school environment.

Elaine was author of a special article along these lines in Vol. 20, No. 3 edition (3rd Quarter, 1999) of this *Journal*.

Rating: Four stars for principals.

*** Every Teacher as a Leader—Realizing the Potential of Teacher Leadership.

By Gayle Moller and Marilyn Katzonmeyer, editors.

No. 1 of a series, New Directions for School Leadership from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Published by Jossey-Bass, 350 Sansome St., San Francisco, CA 94104. 800-956-7739. \$20 plus shipping. 1996.

Principals and academics have joined to provide information and dialogue about leadership and the improvement of schools. This publication, first in a quarterly series, has eight chapters, by different authors, all related to promote developing teacher leaders and achieving “reform” from the classroom.

Overall, content is lively and the text is written in conversational, non-academic language. Authors cite personal experiences about their efforts to institute new practices and procedures.

Rating: Three stars, for the teachers’ circulating library.

*** No More Teachers, No More Books—The Commercialization of Canada’s Schools

By Heather-jane Robertson.

McClelland & Stewart Publishers, 481 University Ave., Toronto, Ontario M4G 2E9. 416-598-1114. \$29.99 hard cover. 1998.

Politicians know what they are doing in Canada, author Robertson writes. They are putting the squeeze on school boards to enter into partnerships so that their friends in high-tech industries gain access to the lucrative school marketplace.

Notes from her text:

- Is the purpose of education to acquire more information, more quickly? Bill Gates says Microsoft’s overall

Mr. Magister



vision for technology in education will be achieved when all children have all the world's information all the time. But Neil Postman asks, What is the problem to which more information is the solution? Postman makes the point that children, as all of us, are really suffering from a glut of information, not a scarcity of it.

- Alberta legislators, critics claim, are funding its budget crisis by placing more kids into the most crowded classrooms in Canada, while a government task force travels the province to discuss giving more public funding to private schools.

- A round table of education "experts" recommended the elimination of schools as we know them in Ontario in the early 2000s. Students could learn with the help of "virtual communities, smart agents and mentor networks" and personal computers. Students could learn on their own time, whenever they choose. Without schools to staff, teachers would no longer be required.

- Thoughtful reflection on technology and school reform has become unfashionable[in many parts of Canada]. Debate is now limited to what brands of technology should be purchased and how fast it can be adopted.

The author has issued a clear warning of the efforts by at least some influential people in government and private business to reshape public education in a dramatic fashion and one not necessarily to benefit youth. United States educators are well advised to read the evidence Heather-jane has assembled and note patterns that are emerging in our 50 states along similar lines.

Rating: Three stars for school board members.

★★★★ Who Said School Administration Would Be Fun? Coping with a New Emotional and Social Reality.

By Jane L. Sigford.

Corwin Books. 1998.

Are new administrators ill-prepared and ill-trained for the socioemotional facets of their jobs? What does a person have to do to *enjoy* being a principal?

Dr. Sigford is now an administrator at St. Paul Schools, Minn. She contends that most preparatory programs in higher education ignore the changes in life stages that a teacher must go through to become a successful manager in a hierarchical system. The literature does not cite socioemotional stages of professional transitions, she says. As a result, people who have gained positive emotional ties to being teachers and being respected need to fully understand the new rules of life in the administrative suite and how to cope with them.

Author Sigford, herself a former teacher, has written this text as a guidebook to prospective and new administrators. After all, why would anyone leave secure teaching to become an administrator, the job that teachers and even students love to hate? Her comments may make a few teachers reconsider leaving that role.

Her book deals with the practical inter- and intrapersonal issues that a person will experience and must be able to handle to be successful as a principal or a central administrator.

Notes from the book:

"In the administrative offices, a closed door appears to mean nothing...

The daily urgency of teachers, the primacy of drop-in parent concerns and the youth of students contributes to the fact that administrators often find their door opened without someone knocking... Are people, particularly teachers, impolite or just rude? First, teachers are constantly under a time pressure, which creates a sense of urgency for their respective issues... Consequently, they interrupt conversations without even being aware of what they are doing. Second, because teaching is such an isolated task, they often feel that their issue is the most important... Third, schools function somewhat like a family in that the staff members are a type of community. One tends to ignore the Emily Post rules in the less formal setting.

"The hierarchical and segmented structure of our educational systems has created a series of in-groups and out-groups... Communication patterns between groups reflect differences [among the bargaining groups, for example]. Within a group, communication occurs relatively equally between peers...open and honest...Communi-

cation either down or up the hierarchy, however, is less likely to be completely open...Communication going up the structure is likely to be guarded because of the power differential... Teachers are not likely to be completely honest with their principals about their fears of professional inadequacy. Principals are not likely to be completely open with the superintendent...for fear of being seen as being incompetent."

Author Sigford has insights and observations even an experienced administrator can relate to and learn from.

Rating: Four stars for novices and veterans.

★★★ Transforming Teacher Unions—Fighting for Better Schools and Social Justice

By Bob Peterson and Michael Charney, editors.

Rethinking Schools 1001 E. Keefe Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53212. 800-669-4192. \$12.95 plus \$3.50 shipping. 1999.



Book Reviews

Rethinking Schools Limited is a non-profit group of urban teachers, parents and education activists who "understand the day-to-day realities of reforming our schools." The book has 35 chapters by unionists, professors, teachers and others who believe that members of education unions "can lead the way towards a more genuine profession for ourselves, more effective schools for all our students and a more just society."

From the book :

What can teacher unions do to fight voucher programs? Answer (by Milwaukee union president Paulette Copeland): "We have to get two key messages to the public. First, we have to let people know what good things public school teachers are doing—the media rarely does that. Second we also have to let the public know that we are aware there are schools and teachers who need help and that we are willing to help them become better teachers. We have to start dealing directly with the quality of teaching. Parents need to know that we are concerned about our children. This is the only way we are going to fight vouchers. The reason people are going to voucher schools in Milwaukee is that they have been led to believe that teachers don't care about their children."

In the eyes of some people, teacher union leaders are thought to be among the biggest obstacles to education reform in urban areas. This book illustrates that many union leaders are eager to build strong alliances with parents and work to achieve equity and social justice in schools and their communities.

Rating: Three stars for teacher activists and progressive administrators.

★★★★ Lead, Follow or Get Out of the Way. How to be a More Effective Leader in Today's Schools.

By Robert D. Ramsey.

Corwin Press. \$24.95. 1999.

Lists, lists and more lists. What it takes to be an effective leader—30 items starting with *Phonies don't make good leaders* to *Leaders have passion*; the 12 worst fears of weak leaders—*fear of failure* to *fear of a tarnished image*; Holistic thinking. *Left brain*: Rational, logic, analysis, objective—*Right brain*: Intuition, fantasy, imagination, creativity; Tips for Better One-on-One Coaching; *Listen carefully and don't interrupt* to **Have fun** as appropriate; you can't kill the grapevine but you can *tell the truth to pounce on lies and set the record straight now*.

Robert Ramsey most recently has been associate superintendent, St. Louis Park, Minnesota, and has written at least four other books before this one. He is concerned that fewer people than a decade or so ago are eager to become key administrators such as superintendents. Many people otherwise qualified may see these jobs as not being much fun, as creating too much stress, with too long hours and tentative tenures.

Dr. Ramsey believes that it's time to reinvent and resurrect leadership in our nation's schools. "We need to recruit and train new leaders. There are plenty of second level administrators who could be effective leaders if someone

Corwin Press, 2455 Teller Rd.,
Thousand Oaks, CA 91320. 805-
499-9774.

would just teach them how to lead."

His book is a guide to such instruction. This reviewer sees it as an excellent text that a university teacher/coach could use with a group of would-be superintendents or change agents. They would learn to get noticed, get ahead and get things done without playing politics; say *no* when needed; speak and write like a leader; how not to solve other people's problems, get the most out of other people, and use the tools of leadership, among dozens of others. This reviewer's main question: Did Dr. Ramsey think up all these 200 or so lists he uses so effectively with narrative? Did he maybe borrow a few from other people along the way? In any case, this is a stimulating text, especially if taken one chapter or list several days apart.

Rating: Four stars as a self-help text or in a graduate Administrator Program.

★★★ The Realities of Teachers' Work—Never a Dull Moment

By Sandra Acker.

Cassell and Continuum, 370 Lexington Ave., NY, NY 10017-6550. Printed in Great Britain, in a Teacher Development Series. Inquire 212-953-5888 or www.Cassell.Co.UK. \$24.95 paperback. 1999.

"The teacher is the ultimate key to educational change and school improvement." The intention of Cassell editors is to present writings about the best research and practices "of the ways teachers' work roles and responsibilities are changing as we restructure schools."

Dr. Acker is professor of education at the University of Toronto, Canada.

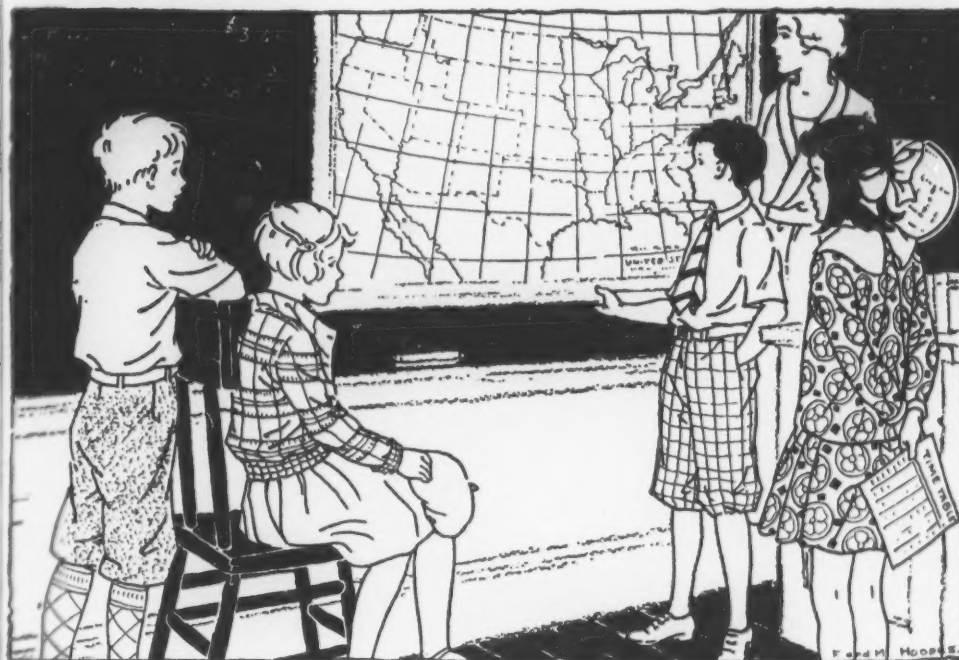
In her book, she follows the fortunes of teachers at Hillview Primary, a real urban school of 200 students in south-west England, over 10 years. She shows how teachers develop a caring culture and how they cope with difficulties of day-to-day work, as well as the effects on them from efforts to impose educational reform.

The book reads well, not quite like a novel, but from a researcher's point of view. The citations of her observations of people and their work engage the reader. She alternates accounts at Hillview with her comments and observations.

From the book:

"Accompanying the general disrespect that leads governments to ignore teachers when making policies is the neglect of the conditions under which





these teachers toil." [Wouldn't it be revealing if *60 Minutes* Mike Wallace took us on an unannounced camera tour of some of New York or Philadelphia or Detroit urban schools, selected at random, and then contrast these scenes with tours of classrooms in Great Neck and Merion and Grosse Pointe.]

"One of my recurring points has been the paucity of physical resources encountered at Hillview. Teachers there do not have enough space, materials, money or help to do the kind of job they want to do. Student teachers are often shocked when they go into schools and discover that teachers do not have telephones, offices, computers and sometimes even a place to hang a coat. There is simply no privacy...the conditions are not peculiar to Hillview nor the British primary schools. An American author comments in 1990:

'No one would ever surmise that teachers' work [in urban schools] is crucial to the future of the country from the physical features of their work places, the conditions of the buildings that house instruction and the supplies that support it.'"

Rating" Three stars, best suited for use in a refresher course or casual reading over few weekends by a prospective or seasoned principal.

*** Reforming Educators—Teachers, Experts, Advocates.**

By Samuel Mitchell.

Greenwood Publishers, 88 Post Road West, Westwood, CT 06881. 800-225-5800. \$59.95 hard cover. 1998.

The apparent purpose of this text is to provide analysis of the main players in education as they try to

innovate or improve schools.

However, the text is quite difficult to read and use. The author uses only a few charts and tables. Examples and case histories or studies are minimal. This is a book with 10 chapters of mostly solid type and very few subheads.

This reviewer cannot determine the audience Dr. Mitchell has in mind for the text. It certainly would not be a welcomed text for a graduate course. Perhaps there is a cadre of post-doctoral students who can appreciate the book. There may be valuable content/substance here, but the style of presentation hinders reception to a major degree.

Rating: One star.

★★★★ School Discipline—The Art of Survival.

By William Kritsonis.

Bookmasters, P.O. Box 388, Mansfield, OH 44805. 800-247-6553. \$19.95 shipped. 1999.

Discipline problems in schools can be vexing to classroom teachers who must confront disruptive students in an one-on-one basis. Just one problem student can cause enough stress to frustrate the most caring and dedicated teacher.

Unfortunately, there appears to be no one magic solution. However, Dr. Kritsonis has developed this useful overview. He reviews various causes of misbehavior, and how social problems contribute to them. He discusses the role of teachers and role of the principal as they attempt to deal with offenders. He reviews the legal implications of various ways authorities deal with misbehavior.

The most useful chapters may be

#8—How teachers can avoid contributing to discipline problems, and #9-15—actions to handle or mitigate student misbehavior.

This reviewer has not seen other books recently that deal with school discipline problems, although they may be available and used in teacher training institutions. This is not a casual topic. Both the Gallup Poll and Public Agenda surveys of the public and teachers cite lack of order and discipline problems of students as a top problem in public schools. One would hope that, at least, school boards direct that teachers have inservice training, firm guidelines and necessary administrative and legal support when facing and handling disruptive students.

Dr. Kritsonis is professor at McNeese State University, Louisiana, publishes five National Forum Journals, and is an editorial review board member of this *Journal*.

Rating: Three stars as a resource in coursework for prospective teachers or as an orientation guide to newly employed teachers.

★★★★ Whole Faculty Study Groups—A Powerful Way to Change Schools and Enhance Learning.

By Carlene N. Murphy and Dale W. Lick.
Corwin Press. \$29.95. 1998.

The authors define study groups as a small number of individuals joining to increase the knowledge to benefit students. The problem has been how to set up study groups that are effective and that teachers will support and respect.

Ms Murphy is a retired teacher and

most recently director of staff development in a school system in Augusta, Georgia. Since 1993, she has worked with 1,000-plus study groups in 100 schools. Dr. Lick is a past president of three universities and now is professor at Florida State University. He is an active consultant in transformational changes.

In spite of numerous attempts at educational reform across North America, most have failed to initiate solutions to the most pressing ongoing problems in education, the authors state. The reason for failure is that most school systems have rigid structures that work against revising the way things operate in schools.

Major change at the classroom level, they write, will only take place with **support, encouragement, pressure and accountability** from the leadership of local schools. If genuine reform is to come from within, the teaching staff must be intimately involved. Teachers must be **perceived, treated and held accountable** as educational professionals.

They believe change from within is possible from properly structured study groups. Their step-by-step guidebook is personalized by 20 "snapshot" citations of actual school transition experiences. They have included sample study groups action plans, copies of specific group plans and comments of participants, logs of various group activities, newsletters and other documents from the field.

The study group would require a great deal of orientation in a specific district. One might wish to obtain a number of these books to study in a planning committee, to learn if the management style of local schools would permit such an approach.

Rating: Four stars for districts or schools with the right mix of leadership styles.

★ **Given Circumstances: Teachers Talk About Public Education Today.**

By Steve Farkas and Jean Johnson.

Public Agenda, 9 East 39th St., NY, NY 10016. 212-686-6610. 1996.

This book is a report of results from two national telephone surveys of public school teachers in 1995. As the material (in this review of 2000) is five years old, it is also liable to be out of date in some respects. The report was based on 800 telephone interviews of current classroom teachers. The 800 were those who agreed to be interviewed, out of the initial list of 1164. Parts of the study report were contrasted with earlier Public Agenda research of a sample of the general public.

Major findings of the 1995 survey indicate that:

- Teachers and parents agree on what should be taught (basic skills, computer skills, a grounding in science, American geography and history).

- Teachers and the public agree that values of honesty, responsibility and respect for others should be taught.

- Teachers say schools need "more" money, "smaller" classes and "far more" discipline and order.

Three of the findings were considered controversial by some at the time. To quote the Public Agenda summary of findings:

"Teacher support higher standards, but raising them is not their most urgent goal."

"Teachers are lukewarm about the value of advanced learning. They do

not believe that top-notch academic attainment is especially important to success."

In the narrative report, the Public Agenda writers concluded that "teachers appear more concerned with their students' social skills and adjustment than with their attaining top grades and test scores." Half of teachers view highly educated people with some misgiving, seeing them as either "book smart" and impractical or as elitist snobs.

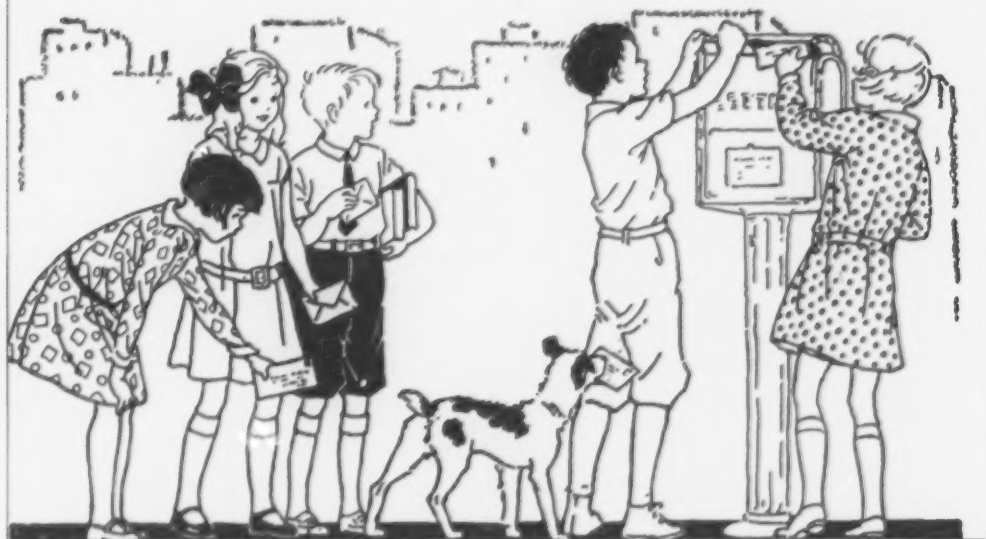
When one reads the exact questions asked and sees the written choices of responses told to respondents, as shown in this report, one looks in vain for "book smart" or "elitist snob." The report contains numerous quotes of individual respondents in narratives about various chapters, meaning the staff asked programmed questions as well as other questions that elicited comments the staff recorded in one fashion or another. The difficulty is a reader does not know if the staff allowed their own bias/views to play a

role in which ad-lib responses as direct quotes they used for the report.

The third controversial matter concerns the finding "Contrary to most other Americans, teachers give solidly high ratings to local public schools."

An earlier Public Agenda study, one not known to this reviewer, is supposed to have shown that the majority "of the public and community leaders have deep reservations about the performance of their local public schools." The language of the finding above (contrary to most Americans...) implies that the public gave "low" ratings to local public schools. That was **not** what the earlier Public Agenda survey reported. The exact language is "the public's **initially positive** evaluations of their local public schools disintegrated when people were asked about specifics." In other words, the public respondents were at first **positive**. But, because they could not give "specifics," whatever that was to be, their comments are then said to have "disintegrated."

In a letter announcing the report,



Book Reviews

executive director Deborah Wadsworth wrote that teachers and the public "have very different perspectives on the performance of today's public schools. Given the obstacles they face, teachers say, they're doing a good job, and that the public schools in which they teach deserve high marks. The public disagrees."

These last three words do not appear to be fully accurate, at least regarding the public's local schools, because of editing by the Public Agenda staff.

An added difficulty is that, for many years, the annual Gallup Poll about education, as reported in *Kappan* magazine indicates that the public gives satisfactory ratings to local public schools and give less satisfactory ratings to public schools across the nation. This puts the Gallup Poll, for this kind of item, in opposition to the Public Agenda survey response, as edited.

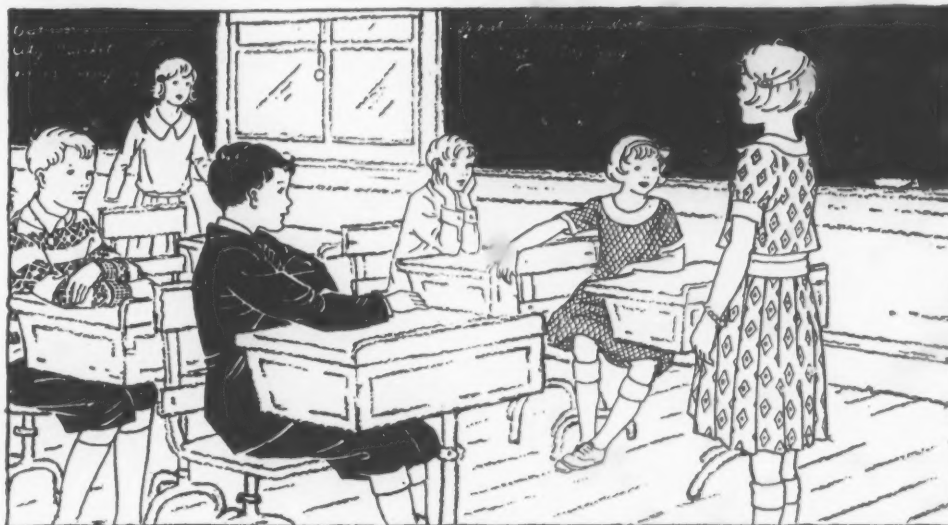
What can a casual reader make of a poll or survey report? One can say for certain that if I like the results, then the report must be valid, and vice versa.

The real problem is that by the way questions are asked or by the methods used in selecting respondents, one introduces bias.

Obtaining a copy of the Public Agenda report, if they are still available, can be constructive to one with and interest in conducting valid surveys. When one sees the volume of questions and items specified for an interview session, and when a respondent is also asked for comments on various topics, it is easy to see how bias can be introduced and validity compromised.

And then one has to see who the sponsors or underwriters of a survey are. One seldom sees a survey report that reflects poorly on the sponsor. Don't be surprised if survey results generally match the goals or views of the sponsor.

Rating: One star.



★★★★ You Sound Taller on the Phone: A Practitioner's View of the Principalship

By Dennis R. Dunklee.

Corwin Press. \$30.95. 1999.

Marvelous. If this reviewer had to recommend one text for prospective principals, this would be the one. Dr. Dunklee has the ability to mix substance of a highly useful nature with style in an engaging manner.

He has used a semi-case study narrative approach about a principal—a Grant Sterling—to represent real-life experiences (all in this study actually happened in practice) and to illustrate the kinds of predicaments one is likely to face in that position.

The text is in the form of a novel, and we follow Grant as he takes over a troubled junior high and works to make it an excellent school, while he becomes skilled at handling people, young and older.

From the book:

"Mr. Sterling," a graduate student in the college education leadership class had a question for the guest speaker, "you use the work *effective* in you discussion. What does this term mean to you, in terms of effective schools?"

"Good question," he responded. "To me, in an effective school, we see leaders leading, managers managing and followers following. We see that the climate of the school is comfortable and promotes success...we note that minimum time is spent with the 5% or less who create discipline problems, while maximum time is spent with the other 95%.

"As a result, students are successful and comfortable with learning and feel

a sense of pride in their work and accomplishments. The school runs efficiently and cost-effectively. Parents and patrons are pleased with the school program, and last, the central office staff and the school board are also pleased with the school program..."

From the book (these are actual memos sent to principals)

Mr. Sterling,

Is it OK for one of your teachers to be dating a high school student? Do you know about this?

Mrs. K

Dear Mr. Sterling,

I have just started work as a regular substitute in your school's area. I hope to be asked to come to your school when the need arises. I am writing this note to you and other area principals to let you, and them, know that I will insist that absent teachers provide me with a complete set of lesson plans for the day they are gone. Thank you in advance for your attention.

Betty Lou W.

Dear Principal,

I live at the corner of Allen and Eastern Aves, and your kids cut through my yard on the way to and from school every day. They trample or pull up my flowers. Please tell them to stop. I've tried, but they scare me.

Alice L.

1152 Eastern Ave.

Grant,

I continue to have problems with Jack Taylor in my class. I've tried everything but I can't seem to get him to settle down. I'm nervous about referring him to you and putting you on the spot. I know his

Book Reviews

dad is not one of your favorite board of education members. Any suggestions?

Doug

Dear Mr. Sterling,

Our church, Trinity Baptist, is preparing a presentation that depicts the Biblical account of the Christmas story. We would like to provide this production, free of charge, to your students in assembly just before your winter break. Would you be so kind as to provide us with some dates and times so that we can schedule this event for the students and faculty at your school. We bring all our equipment and props with us.

Very sincerely,
Kevin S., Pastor

Grant,

I've received a batch of political buttons from the campaign manager for Lee Gordon, candidate for governor. Can I go ahead and distribute those to students today?

Thanks, Mary

The book's 10 main chapters provide a complete overview of situations one will face in that role. At the end of each chapter are detailed questions to lead readers to an analysis of proper and probably questionable courses of action leaders might take in specific cases.

A bonus throughout the book is ample "natural" humor. The book can well be appreciated by a lay person for its human qualities and its implicit portrait of schools of today.

Rating: Four stars for most any reader or student with an interest in education.

Prices shown are for U.S. purchases, and do not include shipping unless so stated. Inquire with publishers for prices outside of the U.S., multiple copy discounts, and shipping costs.

★★ The Principals Companion—Strategies and Hints to Make One's Job Easier

By Pam Robbins and Harvey B. Alvy.

Corwin Press. \$29.95. 1995.

This book could serve as an introduction to the tasks/skills necessary to be an effective principal. Or it could serve as a trouble-reference; the table of contents is detailed and one can find chapters or sections that may help solve immediate problems.

It is a straight forward account of how-tos. Not much humor, little personalization, no case histories to speak of.

Rating: Two stars as a reference.

Mr. Magister

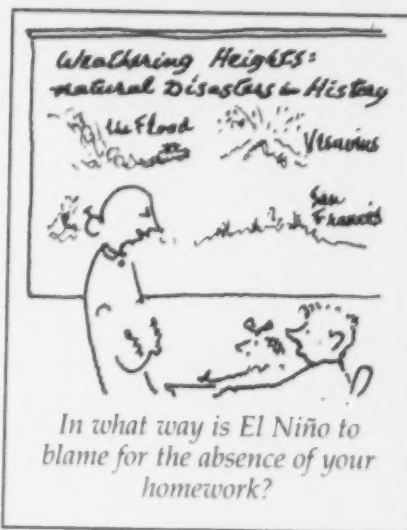


PHOTO GALLERY: Dale D. Gehman.



*Winkler's Rule:
Assumptions are the termites of
relationships.*

Henry Winkler

Photo Credits

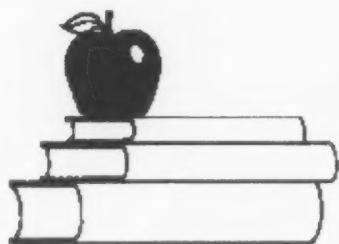
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he is available for assignments.

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1540 Zarker Rd., Lancaster, PA 17601
Call: 717-396-8972.

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Guidelines for Submission

Relations—The Journal of Educational Relations

A refereed journal--scholarly articles by academic/higher education authorities are refereed by an international editorial review board. The *Journal* also accepts articles by practitioners and administrators in basic (K-12) education and journalists at large.

Scope

Articles are sought on topics such as internal communication and climate, employee motivation, parent involvement, partnerships, working with the news media, community participation, audits, surveying and polls, community service programs for students, communication training, advisory committees, volunteers, writing and speaking, publications, alumni associations, foundations, mentoring, photography, and related topics.

The overall goal of the *Journal* is to support efforts to enhance/foster student achievement and staff productivity, and to provide information to build public knowledge of the value and potential benefits of a sound basic education of our youth. We advocate the concept that the school public relations function must be based on fact and reality as compared to ideals and goals of educators and the community at large.

Style

Scholarly articles can be prepared following style guidelines of the publication manual of the American Psychological Association, with these exceptions:

1. Do not place last names of authors being cited and the year *within* the text. Number citations sequentially in the text;

provide usual citations in references following the article.

2. Before the start of the article, include a summary of the scope and major findings of the article in one paragraph.

We encourage you to include photographs, drawings, and tables as appropriate.

Submissions

- Submit four copies of a manuscript with a letter from the author(s).
- Articles should be 1,000 to 3,500 words in length.
- If produced on a computer, supply a disk, clearly labeled, in ASCII format, IBM format only, with the text copies.
- Include an abstract of the article and a two-three sentence credit for each author on a separate sheet.
- Advise if the article has been published or is being considered elsewhere.
- Queries for articles on specific topics are welcomed.
- SASE. Include a #10 self-addressed, stamped envelope for acknowledgement of receipt of your article. Include a 9" x 12" similar envelope for reply to submissions or queries.
- Response to an article or a query is usually conveyed to an author within 60 days.

Address manuscripts and correspondence to Albert E. Holliday, Editor and Publisher, *Journal of Educational Relations*, 1830 Walnut St., Camp Hill, PA 17011. 717-761-6620.

Previous *Journals* are available in microfilm from University Microfilms Int., 300 Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Refer to *Journal of Educational Communications* (1975-83), *Journal of Educational Public Relations* (1984-95) and *Journal of Educational Relations* (1995-).

Prescription for Education Excellence in the 21st Century

All we need to have outstanding public schools are:

- Parents who support and respect the work and dedication of educators.
- Teachers and school officials who respect the needs, interests and opinions of parents and citizens.
- Residents who understand the financial obligations to deliver desired educational products.
- Students who are enthusiastic about learning processes.
- Teachers who find ways to maintain interest of students throughout their schooling.
- Board members whose only agenda is studying issues and setting policy for the common good.
- Faculty and supporting staff members who are cooperative with one another and exhibit positive team spirit at school and in the community.
- Business leaders who cooperate with school authorities to develop partnerships and realistic learning opportunities for students.
- Senior citizens who remember how public education prepared them for life and continue to support their schools.
- Residents who respond to requests to serve as teacher aids, tutors, mentors and other useful volunteer activities.
- Citizens who believe that their public schools should serve the educational needs of all of the community's residents, from early childhood through high school and throughout one's adult years as well.

*By the Editor
Journal of Educational Relations
2000*

The Journal of Educational RELATIONS



PS 029416

Our 26th Year

Notes from

Guest Editorships Are Available

Mel Heller of Loyola University is special guest editor this issue, and we have another guest editor scheduled for the first issue of 2001.

Guest editors are responsible for assembling a group of articles related to a common theme. The GE usually arranges for four or five articles, and we ask that the GE review each one before sending them to us.

This is a fine opportunity for a person or a team of people at a university or an association to give attention to a particular issue that would be of interest to our audience.

We especially like articles that can be of immediate value to school administrators and/or college of education professors who teach or research in the areas of communication and relationships.

We do have detailed written guidelines for prospective GEs that we will send on request. Our telephone number is 717-761-6620. E-mail is aholliday@earthlink.net.

Recommendations for New Subscribers Sought

Publication of the *Journal* is supported only by subscriptions. We do not receive financial aid from any association or foundation, alas.

We would welcome your suggestions as to people (names and addresses) who would value knowing about

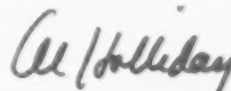
the *Journal*.

In addition, we will make the *Journal* available at a deep discount to members of a state-wide association of communicators, for example, a service of the association to its members. An association official can contact me for details.

Wanted—Communication Policy Statements

We are attempting to help a nearby board consider adoption of a policy statement regarding communications (internal and external). We seek one-page policy statement examples, to show board members how other boards handle this task.

We would appreciate having copies sent to Editor Al Holliday, *Journal of Educational Relations*, P.O. Box 657, Camp Hill, PA 17001-0657.



Albert E. Holliday
Editor-Publisher

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PHOTO GALLERY: Geri Kody.....



*Learning too soon our
limitations, we never learn
our powers.*

*Mignon McLaughlin
The Neurotic's Handbook*

Truth in School-Community Relations: Fact or Fiction?

By Mel Heller

Excellent school-community relations are not accidental nor guaranteed. If good school-community relations are to exist, educators, parents and politicians must communicate honestly with each other. To publicize that schools are on the cutting edge of some dull blade is a disservice to the students, the community, and the educators.

Public relations experts who tout questionable products know that *truth in advertising* is a myth. Politicians know that truth can be bent like a rubber pretzel. Does public relations information disseminated by school officials fare any better? The reality is that criticisms of schools and school personnel abound. Public opinion pollsters point out public dissatisfaction with discipline, safety, and curriculum issues. To placate the public with quick fixes and old ideas with new labels is a betrayal of trust.

In spite of many "reform" efforts, often more rhetorical than real, the facts remain the same:

- Schools do not have sole responsibility for educating students.

- High level socio-economic communities provide more, usually better, resources for students.

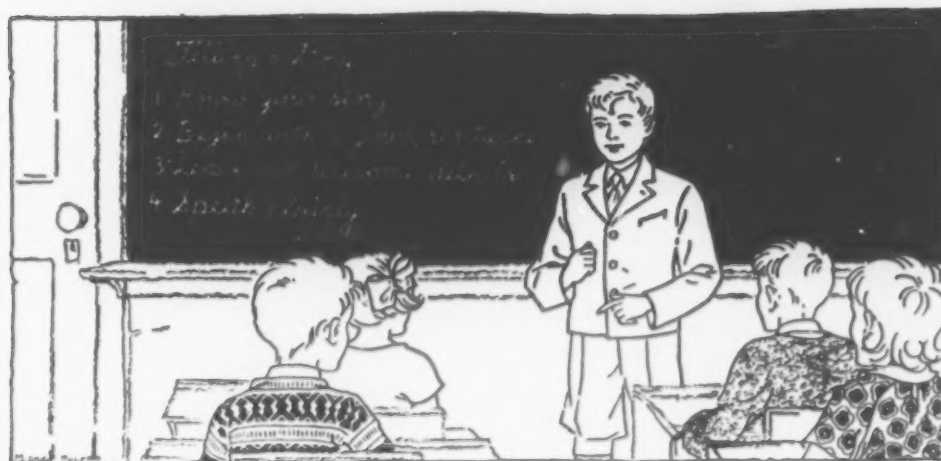
- Societal and political issues affect and are affected by school culture and climate.

- Cooperation and honest communication among educators, parents, and politicians are essential.

Unless all of the stakeholders involved in public education work in mutually supportive roles, communications and reform, per se, will not improve our schools, especially those in low level socio-economic communities.

There are plenty of schools whose officials were implementing "reform" suggestions long before the current labels were foisted upon gullible educators. Perhaps anything is better than the status quo in *inferior* schools (however the label is derived) and perhaps any change, per se, is of some psychic value for educators, parents, and children. But educators are not deliberately trying to do the worst job possible. Facing social, economic, and political forces inherent in every school has

Promoting the Education Product



been a challenge for educators long before many of our current reformers and their glib, pet panaceas were born.

- A simplistic, three-day seminar on *self-esteem* with motivational speakers for stale, tired, and stressed teachers and administrators will not bring about significant improvement in teaching and learning.

- *Co-operative learning* will not in itself promote individualization, personalization, or realistic competition among students.

- *Writing across the curriculum* will not help students improve if *more* writing rather than *guided* writing--not new to good teachers--is the goal.

- If we analyze *strategic planning*, we will realize not only its intrinsic redundancy but also its vintage.

- *Cognitive coaching*, *attention deficit disorders*, *whole language*, and *authentic assessment* are combinations of old ideas and gobble-de-gook.

(If students were really taught critical thinking, they might realize how inept some of the reform moves have been; the students may in turn criticize teachers and administrators--an intolerable circumstance for those educators who

may really need a three-day self-esteem seminar.)

Can we conclude from the foregoing that schools do not need improvement? Only nonthinking people can come to that conclusion. Schools and schooling have many critics, and some of them are enlightened. There is always room for improvement, and there can be merit in some of the approaches cited. But they are not new, they are not necessarily substantive, they smack of fads, and they are often politically motivated. Thus, the validity of the communications by their proponents concerning them is affected.

If politicians and policy makers really want improvement in schools, they will have to become serious about real issues and problems, and consider reasonable solutions regarding public education.

A simple survey, at the local or regional level, can reveal what stakeholders (and students) think concerning their needs and interests. Data from these responses of people can guide policy makers in dealing with educational issues. This approach would stimulate clarity and enhance relevance

Communication Starts with Listening

The only way to learn what people think is to ask them. And one way that can reveal useful information is a survey of a sampling of our stakeholders—especially parents and community members. (For a comprehensive overview, one would want to conduct a parallel survey of a sampling of teachers and local/state legislators as well.)

A survey does not need to be complicated but it does have to be done well. (In many communities, a professional who works in an advertising or public relations firm may be willing to serve as an advisor to school officials planning to conduct a survey.)

Whatever the form or nature of the survey, it should tell you this informa-

tion:

- What do stakeholders know and think about their schools?
- What do they want to know more about their schools?
- What channels of information (media, neighbors, on the job) do they now use to learn about school matters?
- Which channels are trusted and have most credibility?
- Which channels are not satisfactory?
- What do they suggest that school boards/administrators do "to improve"? (This should be an open ended question.)

School boards whose members are eager to represent the public well should have no difficulty in directing the staff to go to the people and learn what they think. ☛

—M.H.

in relations between school and home/community.

Public education appears to have become a main political issue on both the national and state levels. Policy makers need to convince *legislators* and *politicians* of the kinds of financial and personnel resources that are needed to advance school improvements. Our politicians occupy the bully pulpit where practical solutions—not cosmetic changes with fancy labels—can be promoted.

Effective schools do not operate in a vacuum. If educators and parents cooperate in communicating their areas of concern about schools *and* community, there is hope for needed improvement.

We do not need types of reform that merely mask old approaches with trendy titles and inadequate resources. The time has passed for *déjà vu* again. The time is ripe for real *la renaissance*.

Mel Heller is professor emeritus of Loyola University of Chicago (Mellinckrodt Campus, 1041 Ridge Rd., Wilmette, IL 60091).



PHOTO GALLERY: Michael Siluk . . .



*We do not admire what we
cannot understand.*

Marianne Moore

Use the Internet for school-community relations

Clear Skies Over the New Meeting Place

By Terry Stirling

These articles on the Internet may be helpful to administrators and board members who want to use the Internet as a convenience for both the school staff and community residents to exchange and provide information about educational matters. —Ed.

Introduction

The Internet provides a relatively trouble-free venue for school administrators to build positive school-community relations; indeed, the Internet may prove to have a truly revolutionary effect on this traditionally tricky and labor-intensive area. For busy parents, community members, and students, the Internet provides a new and charming place to meet, interact, and exchange information about schools. It is available twenty-four hours a day; capable of being updated instantly; filled with colors, sounds, print, pictures, and graphics; and offers opportunities to converse, contribute, and make an unbelievable array of connections. It is the new town square—el nuevo zocalo, the Greek agora transformed.

A recent Stanford study found that

55% of adults over 18 have Internet access and that, of those, 36% spend five or more hours per week online.¹ Children and adolescents too are increasingly turning to the Internet for communicating with friends and pursuing interests. In a survey conducted in 1999 four out of five freshman were using the Internet for research or homework and 65.9% reported that they communicated by e-mail.² The Education Department in Washington reported that almost every public school now has an Internet connection and that Internet access rose from one-third to 95% of schools in the five years from 1994 to 1999.³ These numbers are growing.

If the Internet holds such great potential for easing the relationships between schools and community, why have administrators, until the present, generally resisted establishing full-featured school and district websites? The answer probably lies in the realm of rationality because until quite recently such projects have been difficult to maintain and dependent on expensive technology "experts." Early school sites have typically been flashy displays with little or no interactive component.

bigchalk.com
The Education Network

search | community | research services | about us | help

Welcome

teachers
Find and build lesson plans
Locate your state's standards
Take an online course

library media specialists
Teach technology
Library research tips for students
Free tech resources

students
Find homework help
Go on an e-adventure
Contests, games and more!

parents
Help your kids with homework
Keep the Internet safe
PTOs and PTAs

HomeworkCentral

The best study and research collections on the web!

search

browse

select age group

All Subjects

select age group

select age group

go!

go!

shop for a cause

What is this?

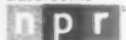


assessment

The Princeton Review and bigchalk.com bring you Homeroom.com for high-stakes assessment

coming soon

bigchalk.com and National Public Radio bring Election 2000 coverage into your classrooms



take an online field trip

Smithsonian Institution
Center for Folklife

Wildlife Conservation Society

Colonial Williamsburg

bigchalk poll

powered by Harris Interactive
Do you think metal detectors should be installed in your school?

login | join

bigchalk community

Create a site

Search for your school

Browse schools by city and state

featured site:

International School Partnerships Through Technology
Built by: 32 schools worldwide, based in Raleigh, NC

calendar

back to school

in the news

powered by ProQuest

Short takes: What do schools have against cell phones?...

Read more

top 8
This week's best sites

GenYES

-- where students, teachers and technology build better schools.

Worse still, community members would become disillusioned after they logged on a few times only to find the very same information present that they had seen the last time they checked. Typically, there were few "hooks" such as current sports schedules or lunch menus to lure parents and community members to the site.

The ease of using the Internet and creating a presence in the on-line world is emerging very quickly. Numerous options are available to the school leaders at little or moderate cost without their having to learn html or other computer languages. And there is little doubt that much more will be available

by the time these words are in print.

Why create an Internet site?

As administrators well know, mutual admiration and respect between those at school and the citizenry must be painstakingly nurtured. When relationships are smooth and facile, one can be reasonably sure that a great deal of hard work and experience produced the illusion of effortlessness. Effective communication is critical to successful school-community relations. The usual avenues of communication (the local paper and mailings, visits to school, school meetings, notes and calls from

teachers, community radio and television, student reports) will, and should, continue.

The Internet, however, has several benefits over the usual avenues. Busy people can access information about schools at any time or place according to their own schedules. Often, they will be checking things on the Internet anyway and can click over to the school site easily. The information itself can be much more comprehensive than space allows in newspapers or bulletins or which broadcast time allows and yet be individualized according to each visitor's particular interests. A parent can choose to get information about school plays, basketball, or a child's homework assignment. Another neighbor might wish to study the school improvement plan or learn the details of the testing program. The information on the Internet can also be updated at any time. Scheduling changes, new events, and recent student achievements can be added or deleted at any time.

People often don't know who to ask when they have questions about school or educational issues. On the Internet, no question is too irrelevant or minor. Navigating is intuitive and organized. If further information is desired, e-mail is available on site. Links can be provided that direct people to click on other sites with more extensive information. Many people have little time or desire to visit school. The Internet is not intimidating. School visits in person can be reserved for special occasions such as parent night, sporting contests, and student performances.

The Internet is also interactive, which encourages a greater number of people to participate in school initiatives than has traditionally been possible. E-mail addresses can be stored on

site for easy access, allowing visitors to write individuals or groups of people by clicking on appropriate boxes. Bulletin boards and chat rooms allow for open discussion. There is far less likelihood that misconceptions can pose as truth or that many sides of any story or issue won't be heard. Conflict can be minimized or shortened and hostilities avoided. People who participate in school matters develop commitment and proprietary feelings for the education of the youth in their community. In many multicultural settings, the use of the Internet allows people from different social groups to speak to one another and learn about particular events.

The Internet allows for multi-media. It is in color, contains visuals, sound, and motion. People enjoy the stimulation and the control they have over the contents. They can appreciate student art, listen to a previously recorded radio broadcast, preview a scene in a school play—in short, learning via the Internet is fun.

Finally, the Internet is time and cost effective. Many of the costs related to maintaining a site are free or available at low cost. By including interactive features and password-protected areas, you may allow your staff, students, and others in the community to actually help you build and maintain your site. They can add discussion topics and comments, useful links, parent and community pages. Through links, you can also direct people to information and research compiled by others at no cost to your district. And, because those visiting the school website can see and/or print documents, the district may be saved considerable printing, copying, and postage costs. Many schools find that businesses as well as

individuals find ways to contribute resources to the school once they become aware of a need through understanding school programs.

What belongs on the school Internet site?

What do people in your community wish to know about your schools? What would you like to tell others about the life of your schools? What would you like to know about the community to keep your district current and relevant? These questions should serve as your guide as you build your website. Communication is reciprocal. This principle should prevail.

The following website contents are meant as suggestions; there may be many more elements to include once you get started. Start small and fearlessly because the Internet is amazingly fluid. You can add, subtract and create avenues without worrying about lock-step organization. I'm sure these ideas will inspire many more.

District homepage. This is the first page that visitors access. It should be reached through a simple address that can be easily recalled. Other pages, of course, include a "home" button so that anyone can return to the homepage easily. Typically, a picture of your schools and students would form a backdrop for the major categories of your site that can be clicked on to continue.

Personnel. People like people. Include pictures, titles and e-mail addresses of the school administration, faculty, and staff. These can be linked to personal web pages when they are available.

District news and initiatives. Here is the place to feature items that relate

to the entire school district rather than to particular schools. Include the school mission, philosophy, and vision. Highlight grants that have been received, external partnerships, business and arts alliances. Publish the school improvement plan and the major school short-term and long-term goals. Brag about awards, achievements, and championships, and college acceptances. Mention coming events. Use this area for articulation between schools. A special announcement section and a "what's new" area could be added for frequent visitors as well as a "deadline" page for news about permissions, inoculations, scheduling, and sign ups for special events and programs.

School Board page. Here is where the members of the school board could be featured. In addition to their photographs and short biographies, they may want to include their major interests and concerns, and statements about timely topics. At certain times they might erect a discussion board topic or ask for opinions via survey or e-mail. They may wish to add links to their own homepages. This may also be a place for school policy with links to the state board of education, the school code, and the federal office of education.

Survey page. This would be a page where the district could survey public opinion on a variety of timely issues.

Discussion board. Discussion topics could be posed by school or community and commented on for all to read.

School homepages. Each school in a district would also have a homepage where parents and students can access practical information such as sports schedules and statistics, bus schedules, lunch menus, performance dates and



ticket information, field trip details, report card information, and parent meetings. Individual teachers, media specialists, and librarians can supply academic information such as homework assignments, library sources, and links to homework helpers.

Classroom pages. Individual teachers construct these pages to highlight units, student work, and test results. As a result, parents can initiate informed discussions about what their child did in school.

School programs. Special programs are often subject to misinterpretation and misinformation. Explain programs such as gifted education, special education, alternative schools, distance education, experiential and outdoor education.

Arts page. Relate student involvement in the arts at school. This is where multimedia can shine. Post student art, videos of productions, films, broadcasts, dance and dramatic performances. Record student music performances to download.

Scoreboard. A special section could be included for easy access to up-to-date sports information. This site could also archive previous sports statistics which would make a nice student project.

Student showcase. The products that students create through academic

work are featured here. Poems, stories, reports, science fair and history fair projects, paintings, sculpture, and drama clips all belong here.

Student personalities. Students can volunteer to share some of their interests here.

Activities page. Describe the various activities of school clubs and special groups. Mention any student community events such as concerts, exhibits, and fundraisers.

Service learning. Opportunities for service can extend beyond students. Relate what people are doing to benefit their society.

SIGs. Special interest group pages can be added. These tend to break down barriers between students, teachers, parents, and community members. Examples are technology, travel, stock market, collecting, genealogy, book club, biking and many more.

Student-oriented pages. Create special sections for students to communicate with other students. Students could easily access others in their rooms and classes, especially those who are working on projects with them. Homework assignments could be posted here. This area could also include links to homework assistance sites.

Alumni/College and Career pages. Feature the successes of various alumni to encourage students to plan for their

futures. This area can include links to quality college and career information.

Teacher-oriented pages. These pages enable teachers to post lesson plans, share ideas, and compare notes on professional development. Faculty committees can set up group communication centers alleviating the need for, at least, some meetings.

Search engines. Include links to several search engines so your visitors can access information easily.

External links. While these will be located throughout your website, you might want to consider organizing quality educational websites. This will inform your visitors that you find these websites to be educationally worthwhile.

How to get started

What are the first steps to setting up an Internet site? Some combination of the following ideas is likely to launch you on your way to an exciting relationship among the various groups in your district and community.

School Website Companies

MySchoolOnline.com

<http://www.familyeducation.com/golocal>

School Notes

<http://www.edgate.com/notes.html>

High Wired.com

<http://www.highwired.com>

Electric SchoolHouse

<http://www.eschoolhouse.com>

Bigchalk.com

<http://www.bigchalk.com>

Scholastic

<http://scholastic.com>

Source: New York Times⁵

1. Create a website committee. This committee should consist of technology enthusiasts who may know more than you do and who love finding technology solutions. Include community members if possible.

2. Visit other school websites. While these are evolving rapidly, you will still not be far behind. A good place to begin your exploration is at WEB66, an international highway of K-12 school websites. This website also offers simple advice on how to construct a school website: <http://web66.coled.umn.edu/schools.html>. Search for other websites by using search engines. If you find sites that you like, call or e-mail the administrators there for advice.

3. Contact technology groups. Technology groups operate like clubs. Find those in your area and seek advice on the most up-to-date help on the web for your project.

4. Consider commercial web construction companies that cater to educators. It is no secret around the globe that the American entrepreneurial spirit is fueling its economy and creating a revolution in information technology. According to the Commerce Department, the information technology industry generated at least a third of the nation's economic growth between 1995 and 1998.⁴ This trend is beginning to benefit schools as Internet companies seek their business. Some sites specialize in hosting and creating the infrastructure for your site. For example, they include templates for many of the features detailed above. These sites are generally free but may include some advertising. (See box.)

5. Mix and Match. You may not wish to use a commercial site designed especially for schools, or, even if you do, you can find many helpful web features and construction tools to enhance the

model elsewhere. The major web browsers and search engines are very helpful. Numerous web-hosting sites are rapidly appearing.

6. Start small. You don't have to have a comprehensive website up during the first week. Put up a few things and you'll be surprised how fast it grows.

7. Staff this project adequately. In addition to your invaluable website technology team, assign enough administrative time to the project. You will need someone in authority from the school to speak for the district, especially if multiple parties are involved.

8. Encourage participation. School-community relations rely on reciprocal communication. With the prudent use of passwords, many authorized people can contribute to various areas of your site.

9. Continue your usual lines of communication. While people become accustomed to accessing district information on line, continue to send newsletters (but publish them on line too), keep the telephone homework hotline going, and send all information to the local paper. Include your website address whenever possible.

10. Focus on students. As you're building your website, remember that nothing is more interesting to your community than the inside story on what students are doing. Include lots of pictures and samples of student work. Demystify the activities in classrooms as well as tell the story of exciting activities in sports, drama, and experiential education.

11. Have fun. Your Internet website will continue to be a creative work in progress filled with the sights, sounds, and words as well as opportunities for engagement. It will be available night

and day for visits which will leave people in your community feeling involved with and proud of their schools.

The Internet has the potential to lift the quality of school-community relations to a level greater than has been possible before in modern life. What a great tool for the school leader. Good luck and see you soon!

Terry Stirling, Ph.D. is assistant professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Development at Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, IL. Her special interests include effective leadership through technology, global education, and school-university partnerships.

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Plug into the Internet to keep the community informed

An example of one school-oriented website

By David E. Szychlinski

David E. Szychlinski is president of the Franklin School Board, Franklin, Wisc.; www.szychlinski.com.

I can't find the lunch menu. My kids want to know if we have to pack a bag lunch or tempt fate with whatever is being served at school. Oh and by the way, when are the parent-teacher conferences being held?

I'm a school board member, and I have file cabinets full of school-related materials, but sometimes even the simplest school flyers get misplaced in my house and probably in yours too.

When high schoolers want to begin researching a topic for school, they rarely turn to the hardbound encyclopedias in which you invested a princely fortune.

They either turn to the CD-ROM versions you purchased for a comparative pittance, or they surf the Internet.

The Internet has changed all of our lives. We use it to get the latest stock quotes, to chat with those we know (and many we don't), and to research a wide variety of topics. So it probably makes sense that school districts make use of the Net as a way of keeping residents informed.

The Franklin School District, at the prompting of several board members who have moved from the on-ramp

onto the information superhighway, has talked about creating a Web site that would include a wide range of information that residents might find helpful. Some of our schools have developed Web sites. Still, we needed a central clearing point for district information.

But because there are many things that a busy school district needs to do, with limited resources and competing priorities, we haven't yet moved beyond the initial planning phase.

I use the Internet for research...and for fun. I even found a distant relative in Poland via the Net. But I am far from an expert. If you want to know more about technology, talk to a kid.

Enter my 16-year-old son. I don't know how he has learned so much about computers, but he has saved me more than once from throwing the PC out the window.

So here is my kid telling me that I should create a Web site for the school district.

All I would have to do is learn "HTML." "HTML?" "Hard To Manage the computer's Language?" No, he starts to tell me about HyperText Mark-

David E. Szychliński Franklin School Board

Welcome to my personal web site. As a member of the School Board of the Franklin Public Schools, it is my attempt at keeping those interested in the activities of the District (and education, in general) better informed. It is designed to be a repository of facts as well as ideas. The views expressed are my own.

If you would like to contact me, please send your email to dave@szychlinski.com

WHAT'S NEW?

- [Budget Highlights for 2000/2001](#)
- [Dave Szychliński Quoted In National Publication on Cellular Phone Policies](#)
- [School Board Minutes from August](#)
- [Wisconsin Reading Comprehension Test Results](#)
- [School District 2000 "Report Card"](#)
- [Welcome To The New School Year](#)
- [School Start Date Issue To Resurface](#)
- [Upcoming Meetings-](#)

August 30 - Franklin City Hall
7:00pm - Joint City/School District Meeting

September 6 - Education & Community Center
7:00pm - Committee Meetings
(Curriculum, Community/Govt Relations, Buildings & Grounds)

September 13 - Education & Community Center
7:00pm - Committee Meetings
(Finance, Community Ed/Rec, Personnel & Policy)

September 27 - Education & Community Center
7:00pm - Board of Education Meeting
(Including a special presentation on performance expectations by Howard Feddema)

- My new web address is easier to remember - www.szychlinski.com



up Language. It's the little code that makes Web pages happen.

Working together, we began to develop what has become my personal Web site. Using your Web browser, you can look at the code that is used to set up any page you are looking at. With Netscape, for example, click on VIEW then PAGE SOURCE. OK, I am showing off a little bit. Cameron taught me that.

While I have learned enough about HTML to keep the pages updated, I have concentrated on the editorial content of the page, leaving the code to my in-house expert.

The challenge is the content. One of the things most expert Web surfers will tell you is that you have to keep the site

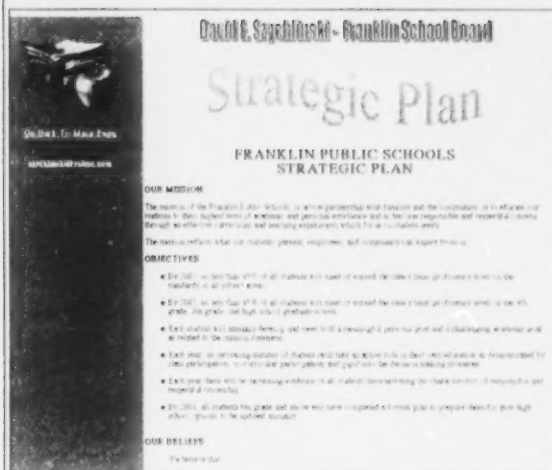
fresh. If you don't, most of your visitors will get bored and never return.

We decided that residents might be interested in the basics like important phone numbers, a list of school activities, and lunch menus.

As a board member I am sometimes asked about specific actions of the board.

So I have included the published minutes of each board and committee meeting.

Then there are the policies. One of the most important functions of any school board is the policies they set. They are the guidepost of the district. Yet most students and their parents never see them.



I have undertaken the task of scanning our policies onto the site. Our policy book is probably as big as yours is, so I am concentrating on those policies that affect the most people as well as the new and updated items.

The Franklin School District has undertaken the laborious process of redistricting its elementary school boundaries. The report of a citizen committee, which prepared four options for the board, is on the Web site.

Now everyone who will be affected gets to see the background work that leads to a decision.

Next up will be detailed information for parents about what their child should know at each grade level based on our educational standards. This information is distributed in booklet form to anyone who asks. But who asks?

Soon the information will be available to anyone who surfs.

I have been careful to state that my site doesn't represent the views of the district of the board. It is a personal Web site. And while it deals mostly with fact, I've included personal opin-

ion on educational issues, which is well-labeled as my personal view. Call that personal privilege. I have included my e-mail address for anyone who disagrees or who may have a question.

A listing of links to other Web sites dealing with educational issues has also proven to be quite popular.

If you choose to pursue the creation of a Web site there are several things to think about. Most Internet service providers will give you a certain amount of free space on their servers to host

your site. You will need to find someone to design the pages. There are many companies that will gladly do it for you. ...for a price. Their prices can be hefty. But you too may have an in-house expert who would be willing to get you started.

Or you can buy one of the many books on HTML that should give you a clue. Eventually most school districts will have their own sites. Official sites can provide a wider range of online services. Teachers could post homework assignments on the Web for students who forget, and for curious parents. Classroom notes are a possibility. School and district newsletters could go online. Web sites could also provide information to taxpayers who don't have students in your buildings and don't get the flyers. The possibilities are endless.

Finally, take a look at my site. Jump on the Web and set your browser to <http://www.szychlinski.com>. Let me know if you think Cameron did a good job.

For me, I am still learning ...gaining speed on the information superhighway.

PHOTO GALLERY: Stacy Edmonds..



*If a child can learn from hard
knocks, the child can also learn
from soft touches.*

Carol Kenmore

A Public Relations Calendar for the First-Year Superintendent

By Linda Tabers-Kwak

You've just landed that "dream job" as a school superintendent. Congratulations! At the same time, you may be wondering why many of the seasoned veterans in education are offering their condolences. Perhaps the paradox of success and defeat about this job comes from the increase of negative media attention on today's schools. Election years and political candidates who tout reform plans—"Panacea A" or "Panacea B"—don't help much, either. Everyone has "the" cure for what ails our public school systems; and ironically, you may begin to feel that your high-profile position has you "destined for failure" right from the start.

What are your first public relations strategies as a new superintendent? How do you acknowledge the negative media attention, while shaping a media plan that highlights the successes of your district locally, rather than the failures as they are perceived nationally? How do you deal with the political aspects of the job?

Developing a careful calendar for community relations is the key to a proactive plan that reshapes a "national

perception" about schools by carefully changing "local perception" through knowledge and involvement. Whether real or imagined, the negative national perceptions exist. As a new superintendent, you do not have time to deal with the philosophical "why" of public perception. The future of your career as superintendent rests in the "way" you change that perception locally.

Consider This First-Year Calendar of Tips:

Dateline July: "The Game Plan"

Welcome aboard. Your initial focus as superintendent will center upon the framework and structure of your administrative team. In fine-tuning a new administrative structure, it is important to find out whether or not the district has a "communications person." Some districts employ a full-time PR director at the administrative level. Some districts use a part-time teacher-administrator. However, many districts

lack a designated communications person.

Analyze the communications design that you have inherited. If there is already one in place, you need to work with that individual to fine-tune a communications plan. If you are at ground zero, you must be creative in designing both a plan and a position that will address the district's communications needs. As the district's leader, you will not have time to be the PR person; but, you need a set of "eyes and ears" out there to meet with key communicators within the community and someone who can ferret out the information sources and undercurrents associated with "hot" issues in your district.

Since you are new to the organization, it may be difficult to identify a trusted lieutenant with whom you will entrust the responsibility of district spokesperson. Likewise, you may have inherited a PR director whose "style" reflects your predecessor. As you define your role as the district's leader, so must you clarify the role of your PR person. Focus time in defining the role and nature of the PR position early. Place a priority on meeting with the existing PR director or in designing a creative way to attain this new, key position. Rubrics, charts, steps for disseminating information, policies, and processes are all-important elements in ensuring that everyone within your

organization knows who "speaks" for the district. A careful media relations plan will not only allay anxiety about what is said, but it will also ensure how, when, and the way in which information is disseminated.

Your first month will be overwhelmingly busy; however, precious time spent now to establish a communications role and system may save you many sleepless nights and emergency meetings in the future.

Once you establish the role, you should plan to meet weekly with your public relations liaison. Have this person keep a journal and 3x5 file cards* of important names and numbers for these individuals. Once you get a system established, it's also important to color-code your community data with tabs.

For example, John Doe may have a blue tab as a key businessman in the community. However, he may also have a red tab as a Rotary Member and a yellow tab as a parent of a student in

*Note: Depending on your district's technology, a database within Microsoft EXCEL could "tab" the data mentioned above. However, be careful if you don't feel comfortable working within the software/technology package. What if your PR person or the secretary is not available and you need immediate access to that data? Don't box yourself into a technology corner if you don't have some of the basic computer skills.

In fine-tuning a new administrative structure, it is important to find out whether or not the district has a "communications person."

If you treat student journalists with respect, they can become a good source of the pulse of various cultures within the student body.

your school. John Doe is a key communicator within your district because he is the "hub and spoke" in how your plan for the district will be communicated. By the same token, John Doe may also be a "hub and spoke" for negative perceptions within your district. Whatever his beliefs, John Doe's communications are vital to your communications data source. Careful organization of data by your public relations liaison will save time and energy as you design committee structures within your organization. Also, the John Doe's are the ones who either make or break a referendum drive.

Dateline August:
"The Key Players"

School opens! Your PR person should now be in the process of identifying specific key communicators within the district. Data files similar to the key communicators within the community should now be established for the following segments of the school's administration, faculty, line, staff, and community:

- Building level administration
- Faculty members
- Support staff - secretaries, teacher's aides, hall/security monitors
- Custodial staff
- Kitchen staff
- Student body representatives
- Parent organizations and booster groups

Even though you are the "new" superintendent, the size of your district might dictate that you would never deal one-to-one with many of these individuals. This is where your PR liaison is important as your eyes and ears.

The opening of school is also a key time for your PR liaison to schedule a time for you to meet with student publications staff members. In addition to their desire to cover administrative issues for the student body, these students often report what they perceive to be a school issue rather than the facts of the issue. If you treat student journalists with respect, they can become a good source of the pulse of various cultures within the student body. You will also engender a climate of respect and trust by recognizing their role. After your initial meeting, your PR liaison should maintain contact for you through quarterly meetings with the editorial staff of each school publication. Request that school publications advisors include board members and key communicators on the mailing list for all school-sponsored student publications.

Dateline September:
"A Positive Message"

You now have a few board meetings under your belt! In your written superintendent's report, establish a segment where you share the "Good

News" of the district by highlighting accomplishments of administrators, students, faculty, and staff. In addition, invite students and their family members to the board meeting, and recognize students with a "pride pin" or a certificate of recognition. Have copies of names and accomplishments available for the press so names or photos are correctly identified.

Get student government representatives involved by encouraging attendance at school board meetings. Board members will have the opportunity to become enlightened on students' perspectives if the students speak and participate. Student government reps are also valuable members of school task force committees because they articulate student needs and perceptions. In new building construction, include the student body in gathering design ideas, especially in computer labs, technology areas, libraries, resource centers, cafeteria and commons areas. One architectural drawing teacher had his students submit their design plans to the school board for the school's new technology wing. Many of those ideas were implemented in the final construction.

Dateline October: "Reshaping Public Perception of Your School"

Meet with your PR liaison to consolidate the district's mailings and administrative publications. To streamline printing and postage costs, many districts are moving toward a district magazine format rather than multiple mailings from various departments or administrators. District magazines also convey a greater sense of the district as a learning community.

Your district's first quarterly magazine should include a letter from the superintendent, updates from building-level principals, a school calendar and general contact numbers and procedures within the district. Student recognition is vital! Highlight awards such as honor roll and individual student achievements. Don't neglect that student who is otherwise never recognized. Consult teachers in identifying a "student of the month" who deserves commendation for personal achievement or academic improvement.

Your mailing list should include all district personnel (via school mailbox), key communicators in the district, the county and state superintendents, families of students within your district, and staffs of administrative offices of districts that may "feed" into your district, local realty offices, government agencies such as villages and townships, and



community organizations. Here's where your database of key communicators works wonders!

Dateline November: "The Superintendent as Politician"

Depending upon the election cycle, you may want to set these goals earlier in the calendar. However, as superintendent it is important to reach out to the political arms of the community.

Meet and work with local mayors and township officials. These individuals possess the political savvy to "know" the demographics of the vote. They can be strong advocates in voter registration, and many officials also serve as precinct committeemen in their geographic areas. A good PR person always knows the audience.

Amidst your busy meeting schedule, try to attend monthly village, township, or county meetings. Develop an open rapport with politicians in exchanging school board information and local political information. This dialogue is especially helpful if you are in an area of large growth. Politicians can be your biggest allies in getting a referendum passed; their livelihood rests on the ability to get votes, and your livelihood may rest upon the ability to pass a referendum!

Encourage students to become involved in local politics. For example, one village mayor appointed a high school senior to a vacant village trustee seat. The student provided a refreshing point of view in the political arena and high school voter registration and involvement increased as a result. Student segments of the population also play a key role in the passage of a

referendum. In addition, many states and state organizations for township officials offer scholarships to students who demonstrate an interest in politics.

Dateline December: "The Superintendent as One of Us"

December is an extension of November's strategy. Expand your community base by meeting with members of homeowners' associations and hosting "coffee chats" with the public.

Various subdivisions within your district may hold valuable information and support in the way of demographics. These pockets of diversity may also represent unique program needs in terms of second language services, outreach services, or parent support groups. As superintendent, your job is to ensure service to ALL the students within your district, whether they comprise 80 percent of your demographics or 8 percent.

One superintendent in the Chicagoland area could boast an 18-year tenure as superintendent with over 33 years in his district. Yet, he could always be found listening to his constituents at the "corner table" of a local restaurant on Saturday mornings. As much as you may dislike the negative connotation of the word "politician," that's exactly how the superintendent often functions as an advocate for his district. Local politicians pander for community votes; however, your success depends upon the votes of your board. Do you win overwhelmingly? Are your board's votes consistently split? Do your board members feel they're being manipulated? Like it or not, it's part of your job. Make sure

Stand by your desk, remove your shoes and have reverence for those who have stood in this place before you.

you're out there talking and listening to the constituents who put your board members in office.

Dateline January: "Your Semester Exam"

While many students in your district are taking exams, why not test yourself? Step back and try to maintain objectivity. Look at your office, your desk, your administrative structure, your pile of phone messages, the flashing red light on your voice mail, and make an honest assessment of the halfway point of your first year as a superintendent. Focus on three accomplishments and identify three goals.

Stand by your desk, remove your shoes and have reverence for those who have stood in this place before you. What lessons have you learned from the history of the past? How many things have you done recently that, before you became superintendent, you said you'd never say or do?

Get your family's perspective. What changes has your spouse or significant other seen in you? If you have children, how have they seen your success? Or better yet, ask yourself, "How often have my children seen me?"

If you failed the semester exam, set goals to pass finals!

Dateline February: "Back to Work"

Get your PR person's assessment at the halfway mark. Who can you depend on in the school and community? Where are the pockets of support? Where do you need to emphasize goals, mission and vision? What does the administrative team, council, or cabinet look like? How should it look to make your organization function better? Is everyone on the same page? Set goals to continue to keep the district's mission and vision for students at the top of the priority list.

Administrative evaluations are also a good time to sit with key members of your administrative team. What do each of these individuals see as the strengths and weaknesses of the organization? Do everything you can to glean an honest perspective from these people. Nothing is more destructive to an organization than an administrative team that tells you what they think you want to hear. What is each person's answer to this: "Amidst the memos, meetings, and committees, the question begs what do we know how to do, and what have we done lately to directly serve the interests and needs of each and EVERY student within our district?"

Don't become part of the fallout from an enrollment explosion; be proactive in protecting the district's interests.

Dateline March:
"A Heavyweight Contender for District Needs"

With spring comes the housing boom. And if you're superintendent of a growing district, you know that new development is explosive. Depending upon the nature of the development and zoning, the resulting increase in enrollment could exacerbate problems in an already strained facility. Don't become part of the fallout from the explosion; be proactive in protecting the district's interests.

Impact fees from developers may be emerging as a hot topic in your district. Your PR person may have shared initial indications of this with you based on meetings with Realtors, Rotary, or Chamber of Commerce members. Make sure you keep an open dialogue with the community about the amount of proposed impact fees a developer is willing to pay. Community groups have much more strength in lobbying politicians and developers than you or your school board. Use open forums or planning and zoning meetings to focus the community's attention on the source of the overdevelopment - the developer. Otherwise, the people's ire becomes directed against the school's administration and school board.

For example, officials in one rural school failed to communicate with the

community about grossly low impact fees from a proposed multi-family development. In the aftermath of the development, supportive community members, who had voted "yes" for one education fund referendum, transformed to avid "no" voters for a building fund referendum because they believed officials of the board had "sold them out." By staying up to date on local politics, you can avoid becoming the brunt of political finger pointing.

Dateline April:
"We Need A Break"

Spring Break often marks the "beginning of the end" for students. The weather is warming, dress code violations and campus trancies increase, and the pre-graduation pranks have administrators on edge in fear of negative media attention.

School safety has become paramount since the Columbine incident. As superintendent, your support of partnership programs can go a long way in getting help with student safety and building security. Several Chicago-area schools have implemented school liaison officer programs through their local sheriff's departments. These high schools employ trained police liaison officers who serve as a low-key presence on the campus during school days, and they are also instrumental in facilitat-

ing intervention plans as part of the school's crisis team. As a result, school safety issues for administrators in these schools was not an area that had to be built from the ground up, but rather a review of a system that was already in place. Additionally local police agencies benefit by having police officers who become familiar with juveniles who may have knowledge of or may have participated in petty crimes, gangs, or drug activity in the community. An established rapport with these individuals helps local police to be proactive in crime prevention, and students have an opportunity to work with local law enforcement rather than against it.

Dateline May: "Graduation"

As the school year closes, the public relations calendar becomes packed with honors nights, athletic recognitions, concerts, and commencement ceremonies. The public relations duties of the superintendent should focus on showcasing each school in the district. An open house or school tour at the end of the school year brings the district's mission and the curriculum in alignment as a complement to the open house or school tour that was held at the beginning of the school year.

As the academic year comes "full circle," this is also a good time to host a "thank-you" for various key communicators in the community, parent groups and organizations, and student government representatives. As superintendent, your invitation to these various constituencies is key in recognizing a spirit of involvement and dedication. At the same time, this event lays the foundation for commitment to the

next year's list of tasks and goals.

Dateline June: "Summer School"

Congratulations! You've made it through your first year as superintendent. Like this year's graduates, you, too, have survived an educational rite-of-passage. Although the top of your desk might suggest that you haven't accomplished much, the strategies of a solid PR calendar have established valuable links to your school community.

Throughout your tenure, each link will bond in a strong chain of community leadership. And although all of the links may not be solid gold, each holds a value through its nature as iron, brass, or steel. As you plan next year's public relations calendar, examine the links in your community relations chain. Consult with your PR person in assessing the variety of characteristics within the metal that comprises each link. Are there any stress cracks? Are any links severed beyond repair? Over time, all of these links will be tested; therefore, continual renewal of your relationship with the school community should remain a priority of your superintendency.

Development of a PR calendar can help ensure that community relations don't get overlooked amidst the day-to-day responsibilities of the superintendent.

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PHOTO GALLERY: Michael Siluk.....



*Life is a gamble, a chance,
a mere guess. Cast a line and
reel in a splendid rainbow trout
or a slippery eel.*

Mourning Dove, Cogwea

Adept Parents Demand More

How to Manage Parent-Educator Relations in an Affluent Community

by Bonnie Burns

This article should be of great value to ... educator who has an assignment, for the first time, in an upscale, economically blessed setting, where the "children are all above average," at least in their parents' minds. —Ed.

Illuminating anecdotes abound about parents in affluent communities:

- A student who had forgotten his lunch called his mom at work. She faxed an order to the local deli and had a sub delivered by taxi.
- A room mother came to school in her full-length fur coat to ask the teacher about refreshments for a class party. She said she would be delighted to send treats, but they would have to come from the bakery because she had never baked any cookies herself.
- A set of parents showed up in the principal's office in the morning with their lawyer to object to a detention their child had received for being naughty during recess.

As a parent and a teacher in an affluent community for the last 11 years, I've watched these incidents and analyzed attitudes and actions of both parents and educators.

Affluent parents want the same things for their children that any other parents want; they're just more adept at

knowing how to get them, although at times they step on others' toes in the process.

Educators need to learn how to deal with affluent parents who can be especially assertive. They have to learn when to cherish the many advantages that affluent parents provide for their children, but they also have to be aware when the desires of affluent parents may not be in the best interest of the entire school community.

Affluent Parents Can Be Demanding

Affluent parents are often demanding because they understand the correlation between an excellent education and achievement in later life. These parents are usually well educated, successful, knowledgeable about dealing with bureaucracies, not easily intimidated, and have clout in their own realms and often in the community. Barriers that often hinder parent-educator relationships such as language barriers, lack of child care, lack of transportation, and the feeling that they do not know as much as the educational experts are not common in affluent communities. Most parents remember "their own schooling with nostalgia

Managing with Affluent Parents

and pride"¹ and believe the system worked for them, so they are hesitant to see it changed.

Affluent parents—APs—often see their children as being bright and academically motivated. Thus the educators in schools that their children attend should serve their special needs by offering highly academic courses that challenge and interest their children (and in which their children can succeed and have junior clout and status of their own).

APs generally credit themselves for providing the encouragement, stimulation, support, and values that lead to high achievement. Thus the child's academic success reflects on the parents. One affluent mother said, "High income parents would be embarrassed if their kids did not go to college. Low-income parents are proud if their children go, but are not embarrassed if they don't."¹ The parents' beliefs about their roles and influence are frequently well founded. APs generally demonstrate styles of interacting with their children that have been found to be predictive of high achievement. Clark found the parents of high achievers "created an emotionally supportive atmosphere home environment and provided reassurance when the youngsters encountered failure. They viewed school performance as being accomplished through regular practice and work. They accepted responsibility for assist-

ing their children to acquire learning strategies, as well as a general fund of knowledge."²

Although parents of any socioeconomic class can exhibit these characteristics, they are prevalent among wealthier parents, especially the third characteristic: assisting children with strategies and knowledge. Since parents are doing their part, they expect educators to do their part with equal vigor.

Parental Involvement in Affluent Communities Can Be a Blessing

Excellent parent-educator relationships in all economic settings are important. "Studies conducted over the last 30 years have identified a relationship between parental involvement and increased student achievement, enhanced self-esteem, improved behavior, and better school attendance."⁴ While educators in many other schools must develop a parent outreach program, involving parents in an affluent community is an easier task due to a strong interest in education and existing patterns of parent-student interactions that promote achievement. Smart school administrators and teachers provide many opportunities for participation and personal contact and provide scads of written communication.

Educators in affluent schools provide opportunities for parents to participate in all the same activities that other schools provide: open houses, teas, par-

While educators in many other schools must develop a parent outreach program, involving parents in an affluent community is an easier task

ents' nights, parent-teacher conferences, special education meetings, graduation committees, performances, fund raisers, parent-teacher organizations, and question and answer nights. Parents serve as art moms, adults who listen to young students read, office volunteers, and room moms. Many parents are eager to volunteer, especially at their own schools, although participation at the elementary level is more prevalent.

Parents in affluent communities often feel comfortable participating in more intricate ways: career days, curriculum planning committees, and strategic planning. When events are publicized to the community in general, it is also fairly common for community members who are not parents to volunteer for committees if they have expertise in financial planning, public relations, or with educational issues. However, their time is valuable, and they expect committees to function efficiently and orderly.

Because AP's generally hold responsible positions, they are used to being listened to and their advice taken. In affluent communities, as well as in other communities, it is necessary to clearly define roles. For example, are parents to be given a consultative role or are they actually to be part of the decision-making process? Nothing is as demoralizing as believing that one is part of the decision-making process, only to find out that this was not part of the intended rules of the game.

Although parental involvement in school activities promotes a positive climate, that involvement by itself may not lead to higher student achievement. Parental engagement at home and parental engagement at school are not equal contributing factors to high

Dos for Educators in an Affluent District

1. Listen. The affluent community is populated with effective and knowledgeable decision makers.

2. Rely on parents to help; they will.

3. Keep parents informed through written information.

4. Keep a sizable chunk of your schedule open for personal visits, phone conversations, faxes, and e-mails from parents.

5. Take advantage of community resources; they're bountiful.

6. Conduct parent and community meetings efficiently. Their time is as valuable as yours is.

7. Have a clear policy on extended absences and make-up work.

8. Develop a plan for coordinating requests for placement in certain teachers' classes with the overall needs of balanced student placement.

9. Have clear policies, guidelines, and cutoffs for placement and removal in gifted, talented, and honors classes. ☛

Affluent parents always seem to know who the strongest teachers are and make requests for their child to be placed on that teacher's class list.

achieving students.² Supporting children's learning and study habits at home has the higher positive correlation with student achievement. For a greater impact on student achievement, administrators may even wish to offer parent seminars about homework interaction and how to provide support and guidance rather than asking parents to organize another bake sale. Fortunately, most APs are interested in and adept at providing structure, active involvement, and tutoring if necessary.

Personal Communication Helps to Foster Parent-Educator Relationships

There are several ways that school staff can improve home-school relationships. Aiding parent-educator relationships in an affluent district sometimes has a special twist.

Personal communication with parents is necessary for an improved home-school climate. When parents are personally asked to attend a meeting, participate in a function, or more closely supervise their child's homework, they are more likely to do so. Direct personal communication builds trust that is invaluable in an age where people are more distrustful of nearly all institutions but especially of governmental agencies. Parents still rely on judgments and recommendations from people they personally know in the school community. Without those contacts, the only information avail-

able may be the barrage of school bashing so common in the media.

When contact is made by school personnel, it is important to be direct and frank. APs are not going to be bamboozled by professional jargon or general platitudes. Ron Brandt⁵ cites a series of research studies by Jane Lindle that found that parents wanted teachers and principals not to be patronizing or to talk down to them. They liked teachers with a personal touch. In addition, teachers should not be offended if APs use one's first name. It is a common social custom rather than a sign of disrespect.

Often an abundance of personal contact is more problematic than lack of personal contact in affluent school districts. As high-income parents are not intimidated by bureaucracy, they simply start at the top. They are used to getting results by dealing with bosses rather than employees.

Smart administrators use several appropriate techniques to counter these tactics. Routine classroom questions can be channeled to the teachers first. One principal publishes her e-mail address in every newsletter and can handle many inquiries without protracted personal conferences. Knowledgeable secretaries are a life saver. It can be difficult to be cordial while being swamped by parents.

When personal meetings do occur, one staff has set up a small conference room with sofas and a coffee table so meetings can take place in a comfort-

able atmosphere rather than on miniature chairs or in an office piled high with forms to be filled out for the state. Appearance does count.

Ongoing Written Communication is Essential

Information helps to provide continuity in expectations between home and school. APs expect plenty of written communication, and most of the time they do read it. It needs to be correct both in content and mechanics. Calendars, especially, need to be sent out far in advance. (After all, a trip to the Caymen Islands might have to be booked months in advance.) Another form of written communication is a lending library for parents on educational and child rearing issues. A luxury that affluent schools have is mailing newsletters, registration packets, and other announcements. The bill for postage would be staggering for schools with less revenue.

On the topic of booking trips, the staff needs to have a clear policy on make-up work and homework because there are going to be plenty of trips. The idea of never pulling kids out of school for a trip or vacation is from another age or a lower socioeconomic class. It is going to happen, so the policies must be clear. Some teachers are using their fax lines to send homework to Switzerland for two weeks. E-mail attachments are another possibility. Although irregular attendance infuri-

ates teachers and disrupts instruction, clever educators are looking at alternatives for getting assignments to their students wherever they might be.

Selection of Staff is Important

Every community wants a highly qualified teacher in the classroom and one who will be compatible with the students, but one administrator in a wealthy district has added another qualification for hiring teachers. She says she imagines the teacher speaking to a room full of parents on open house night and imagines that teacher's personal appearance and speaking style. In an affluent community, teacher candidates who are low key and well spoken have an advantage. These unspoken requirements do not exclude diversity or enthusiasm, but they do temper the choices. Hiring teachers who are compatible with parents as well as with students is an important consideration in a wealthy district.

APs always seem to know who the strongest teachers are and make requests for their child to be placed on that teacher's class list. APs may have more social opportunities besides just talking over the back yard fence to communicate with other parents. Most parents are well informed about what goes on in the classroom. They ask their children what they did in school today and will not take "nothing" for an answer. Conversation does occur around dinner tables, and it is not

Conversation does occur around dinner tables, and it is not unusual for a parent to read an assigned novel at the same time his or her child is reading it.

unusual for a parent to read an assigned novel at the same time his or her child is reading it. School administrators need to develop a policy about whether requests for certain teachers will be honored, about deadlines for requests, and about whether the request must be in writing. They need to develop a philosophy and a plan for balancing student enrollment in classrooms. A consistently applied policy prevents many problems.

The Concerns of Affluent Parents May Not Always Be a Blessing

Wealthy parents want the best for their children, as do all parents. Their desires sometimes conflict with what educators judge is in the best interest of all children.

Many parents who are concerned about their children's education make substantial sacrifices to live in a "good" school district, which often means in a district that serves all or mostly high-income students. Another mother in Brantlinger and Guskin's study made this very clear.

I just want my children to be with children with educated families who are motivated and have values and goals. I don't want my kids to be a model for other children and feel the gap. I would prefer my kids to go to school separated by social class.¹

Small districts in affluent neighborhoods are almost like private elite schools. The parents who live there—including lawyers, judges, legislators, public relations and advertising professionals—can be quite effective at blocking consolidation efforts although district consolidation may be beneficial to a larger populace. In Long Island in 1992, a consolidation plan that would have saved \$140 million in administrative overhead was rejected. There were considerable differences in the populations that would have been consolidated into a larger more heterogeneous district.⁶ Socioeconomic differences, racial differences, and tax rate differences are contributing factors. Legislators are also reluctant to usurp the power of other elected officials in a consolidation plan, "especially since school board positions are stepping-stones to higher elective office and sources of patronage for political clubs."⁶ As parents have made substantial sacrifices, they are often wary of changes that may make their district more open or less traditional.

In districts that have a socioeconomic mix, and even in those that are relatively homogeneous, student placement, programs, and grading policies are very difficult issues. Many educators believe in heterogeneous grouping and developing academic and social skills among all students. However, many

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Fortunately, in wealthy communities, most students do well and just as in Lake Wobegon, everyone can be above average.

APs are not interested in all students—just theirs. This is not unlike the concerns of most parents, but the concerns of many wealthier parents include ensuring that their children are challenged, do well, and their efforts are rewarded, which sometimes means doing better than someone else. Something concrete, something comparative, something attached to numbers is preferable. It is difficult for any parent to judge how well his or her child is doing in school, but the affluent parent often craves more than just verbal assurances. Honors level courses, class rankings, honor rolls, awards, letter grades, weighted grades, and gifted classes make kids visibly stand above the average.

Separating high-achieving kids from the general school population in honors or gifted classes is often looked at by APs as being desirable. Their belief is that their children's academic success is undermined by the necessity of meeting the demands of "others." Brantlinger and Guskin report "mothers communicated that separate educational programs were necessary because otherwise low-income kids would pull their kids down"¹ because they were not motivated or did not value education. Gifted classes remain sacred cows, and few administrators or school boards choose to do battle to challenge the status quo. APs often oppose any reform movements that threaten to remove these visible badges of their students' status.³ This opposition represents a predicament for educators

who are charged with meeting the needs of all students, allocating financial resources fairly, and making school a place for learning rather than a place for accumulating a high grade point average for acceptance into a desirable university.

Fortunately, in wealthy communities, most students do well and just as in Lake Wobegon, everyone *can* be above average. Although seldom specified in official policy, some teachers offer class work that is above grade level (to truly challenge students) but grade that work at grade level, thus providing high grades for most students. Others question if this is just simple grade inflation or if the incentive for hard work is removed when nearly everyone gets high grades.

However, when the norm is high achievement, it is particularly difficult for the average child who may score at grade level but is in the lowest quartile of the class. It is even more difficult for the learning disabled child because the gap can turn into a chasm. Many high achieving schools have an impressive array of support services, electives and extra curricular activities so that students may excel in their areas of aptitude.

A rather surprising current development is that some APs are asking for special education testing and placement for their children. The negative image sometimes associated with special education occasionally evaporates with the prospect of untimed tests (remember the SAT is coming up) and

Maintaining positive parent-educator relationships is usually easier in a wealthy community

a belief (usually unjustified) that special education can offer the equivalent of private tutoring.

Maintaining positive parent-educator relationships is usually easier in a wealthy community than in an average community because the parents are supportive of education and bring so much to the partnership. The techniques for creating or maintaining a healthy relationship are not very different from those that are successful in any other school. However, the difficulties lie in making decisions about the visible badges of achievement and ensuring that all students can be successful.

Dr. Bonnie Burns lived and worked as a teacher in an affluent community for 12 years. She also taught and served as an administrator in poor districts and spent some time in a district in Arizona with mostly Native American populations. After 33 years in K-8 public schools, she now teaches at Dominican University. She can be contacted at Dominican University, 7900 W. Division, FA 201, River Forest, Illinois 60305 or at drbonnieb@aol.com.

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PHOTO GALLERY: Michael Siluk.....



As a child, my number one best friend was the school librarian. I actually believed that all those books belonged to her.

Erma Bombeck

Case Study

The Case of Hedgewood High:

Maintaining Your Principles in A Public Relations Crisis

A school nurse's past becomes a potential public relations nightmare for her high school and her childhood friend, the assistant principal.

By Phyllis Johnson

Assistant principal "Dizzy" Dietz entered the nurse's room cautiously. Here it was 9 a.m. and the light of the nurse's office was off, the door was slightly ajar, the first aid medicine cabinet was wide open, and Linda Peters was no where to be found. A moment later, Linda, the school nurse, staggered into the room from the bathroom adjoining her office, and fell to the floor.

Ms. Dietz screamed, "Linda, Linda! Oh, my goodness. Oh, my goodness!"

Ms. Dietz picked up the phone and rang the principal's office. "Something is wrong with Linda. She fainted! She's out like a light!" exclaimed Ms. Dietz.

Principal Druthers responded, "Don't tell me! Call 911. I'll be right there."

"Right!," said Mrs. Dietz. Her friends called her "Dizzy," but her birth name

was Elizabeth Dietz. Her childhood nickname of Lizzy evolved into Dizzy during those awkward adolescent years, and the name pretty much summed up her personality. Ms. Dietz always seemed a bit scattered. Recently, her physician prescribed an anti-anxiety medication to control her mood swings and inability to focus on a task for more than several minutes at a time.

Ms. Dietz swiftly dialed 911, and described the situation to the operator. Nurse Peters began to move about, and she managed to say, "It's okay, Dizzy. I'm okay. Put down the phone."

"Don't worry, Linda, the ambulance is on the way," said Ms. Dietz, as she attempted to comfort Nurse Peters.

"No! You fool! Put down the phone. I'm okay," exclaimed Mrs. Peters, grasping for a nearby table as she attempted to stand up.

"Linda, you're in no condition to move," said Ms. Dietz.

Now barely standing, the school nurse reached into her desk drawer, and stumbled back into the bathroom. Mrs. Dietz tried to help Mrs. Peters, but she shrugged away from her.

Then, Mrs. Peters emptied a pill bottle into the toilet, and flushed its contents. Exhausted, and her legs weak, she collapsed on the bathroom floor.

At that point, Principal Druthers had escorted the Emergency Medical Technicians into the nurse's office. "In here, guys," boomed Druthers. Then he looked around for the women, and saw Ms. Dietz trying to revive Nurse Peters.

The EMT's rushed in and as they lifted Mrs. Peters onto a stretcher, a pill container rolled on to the floor. The EMTs asked Ms. Dietz several questions about Mrs. Peters and the pill bottle. And then they said, "Do you know an Elizabeth Dietz?"

Ms. Dietz always believed her friend was involved in some shady dealings. Now, she was extremely anxious. Maybe Linda...was back into drugs again.

"Why, that's me," Ms. Dietz announced, surprised.

"So these were your pills?" asked one of the men.

"No. I mean, I guess. But I don't know how Linda ended up with them," she explained.

With Linda still out cold and breathing erratically, one of the EMTs asked Dizzy to ride along in the ambulance to help clarify what happened. As Dizzy climbed inside the vehicle, she noticed that Druthers seemed angry and perplexed. He continued to stare at the ambulance as it raced off. Ms. Dietz started to think about the pills: "How did Linda get my pills? Did I leave them at her house? Did she take them from my purse?" She had thought that she had misplaced her pills, but she wasn't sure now. "Oh no," she thought. "It's happening again."

On the way to the hospital, the EMTs really didn't pursue the matter of the pills. Dizzy left the hospital 45 minutes after she had arrived to the Emergency Room. Nurse Peters was conscious, but groggy. The physician on duty told Dizzy that she could call back later for a progress report, and said that her friend would be fine.

The Big Picture

Ms. Dietz was childhood friends with Linda, and they even went to college together. While she majored in education, Linda majored in nursing. While still in college, Linda was involved in a drug scandal. One of her professors accused her of stealing medicine during one of her clinicals. He alleged that she was selling amphetamines to college students who wanted to pull all-nighters during finals. The professor never proved anything, and the incident eventually died down, partly due to her father's position on the Board of Trustees. As a well-respected board member and hospital administrator, he told the professor that he would be sued for slander unless he could provide something more than circumstantial evidence.

Ms. Dietz, however, always believed that her friend was involved in some shady dealings. But things changed fairly quickly when Linda met and married Joe. Life was great for awhile. Then, after five years, her marriage failed. The divorce crushed her friend's spirit. Joe had left her for another woman, and now she was struggling to pay her mortgage. She had two children—1 and 3. She was only working part-time weekday mornings as a school nurse, after recently being fired from her other job. "The head nurse never liked me," complained Mrs. Peters.

But now, Ms. Dietz was extremely anxious. Maybe Linda had been fired because she was back into the drugs again. "Oh my goodness," thought Ms. Dietz. "What a pickle for an assistant principal to be in," she sighed.

Principal Druthers never liked Dizzy. In fact, he knew that her recent appointment to the assistant principalship was political, but he wasn't sure how Ms. Dietz figured into the big picture. What he didn't know was that Linda's father, Brandon Landon, was friends with the superintendent, and he was very appreciative of Elizabeth Dietz's discretion about his daughter's college days as well as Ms. Dietz's glowing recommendation of her friend. That recommendation, along with her father's friendship with the superintendent, made Linda Peters the top candidate for the job. She began as the high school nurse in mid August.

"It wasn't much," Landon had thought at the time. "But it was a start—a way to get Linda back on her feet again, and maybe build her self-confidence."

In return, Landon had highly recommended Ms. Dietz to Supt. Kyle Wordum for an administrative position should one arise. "She's a rising star, Harry," Mr. Landon said, nudging Wordum. When the previous assistant retired mid-year due to health prob-

lems, Elizabeth Dietz was named as the new assistant principal.

Principal Druthers was furious, for he had hoped that Coach Pumpert would move into that slot. The guy was a total organization genius, and the students loved him. He was hoping that once the previous assistant had retired, he would have some "real" help with the paperwork and students. Druthers thought Ms. Dietz was unqualified for any administrative position, let alone assistant principal. She had been hired six years ago right out of college from the nearby state university, and had proved herself to be indecisive and disorganized. She had great ideas, but she had no sense of direction. Everyone liked her, but she frustrated students and teachers with her inability to make a decision, to stay on task, and her tendency to be easily swayed by a good hard-luck story.

It was easy to take advantage of Ms. Dietz, but she was also the first person that students and teachers would seek for advice and counsel. In the past three months, she had established a school day care for adolescent mothers, an anti-drug community task force comprised of parents, students, and teachers, and a scholarship fund for students that demonstrated commitment to community issues and service.

"Fluff," grumbled Druthers. He had

The principal was hoping that once the previous assistant had retired, he would have some "real" help with the paperwork and students. Druthers thought Ms. Dietz was unqualified for any administrative position, let alone assistant principal.

been a basketball coach and a social studies teacher for 15 years, and had only moved into administration in the past five years. "What does this woman know about running a school?" he complained to the superintendent Wordum.

"Well, get used to her," retorted Supt. Wordum. "She is here to stay. She has given us some great PR moments on the evening news and in the local newspapers. Come on, even Peter Jennings at ABC did a special on her school day care program."

"But what does she know about the day-to-day issues? You know that she's a ditz. She's lost the keys to the school, my office, and even her car in just one month alone. She is always behind in her paperwork. She can't make a decision to save her life," continued Principal Druthers.

"Okay, Dan. I realize that she doesn't have all her marbles sometimes. But man, she is great PR for the district. Let her do the PR, and you do the paperwork. I'll see if I can get you some more secretarial assistance," said Wordum.

Druthers walked away, huffing in anger. "Let her do the PR, and you do the paperwork," he grumbled, as he mimicked Mr. Wordum under his breath. Inaudible to the superintendent, he continued, "I don't think so."

Back at the Office

At lunch time the same day, Druthers was catching up on some paperwork when the phone rang. He saw Ms. Dietz slip past his door, and motioned her to stop into his office. She pretended not to see him. All she wanted to do is hide in her office. She dreaded her impending lecture from Druthers. Surely, he would have a few

words to say to her about the pill bottle.

Ms. Dietz was very aware of her faults. For one thing, Druthers reminded her of them everyday. She had even tried to enroll in a course on self-assertiveness, but she couldn't decide whether to take it on a Tuesday or Wednesday, and the class closed before she made up her mind. Yes, she had a lot of problems. But nothing compared to today. Her close friend had overdosed accidentally on some pills—her pills! Now everybody would learn that Dizzy was taking anti-anxiety medicine. And they might even think that she gave the pills to her friend. Why was the school nurse ingesting pills prescribed to the assistant principal? That would not be appropriate or legal behavior for a school nurse—especially one that oversees the anti-drug task force for the school. "Oh, my, my," thought Ms. Dietz, as she worried about things to come. "This has the potential for a public relations nightmare. A school nurse on drugs—and on my drugs. I should have never recommended that we hire her. I knew her past. But there was never any proof—not until now." Then she regrouped herself, and sat up in her chair, and thought "Or maybe I shouldn't worry. Maybe nothing will come of this."

At that moment, the phone rang. She picked up the phone. "Dizzy, the doctor is asking a lot of questions. If anyone asks, tell them that you left your medicine in my office," whispered her friend Linda Peters.

"I can't lie, Linda," she quickly responded.

Mrs. Peters continued, "I'm not asking you to lie. Come on, I bet you can't even remember where you left your pills. It could have been in my office."

Case Study: Hedgewood High

"But it wasn't, right?"

Nurse Peters refused to back down. She continued, "What difference does it make? Just say that you forgot your pills in my office, and that I probably took the wrong pills. You know I've been taking pills for a minor bacterial infection for several days now."

"You have a problem, Linda. You need help," said her friend.

"Yeah, I have a lots of problems—no husband, no money, and a friend who doesn't realize that she owes me."

"For what?" exclaimed Ms. Dietz.

"Dizzy, my dad set you up really nice. You like your job, don't you? Look, I gotta go. Remember we need to work together on this one."

Ms. Dietz, bewildered, dropped the receiver. As she managed to hang up the phone, it rang again.

"Hello, Ms. Dietz. I hope that you could help me with some questions," asked a woman who sounded authoritative and fortyish.

"What kind of questions?," said Ms. Dietz.

"My name is Tatum Brown, and I'm a reporter for the *Hedgewood Herald*. I understand that the school nurse overdosed in your school today, and that she is a good friend of yours."

Ms. Dietz remained silent.

"Ms. Dietz, are you there?" continued the reporter.

"Yes, I'm listening," said Ms. Dietz, now barely breathing.

"Mrs. Peters is the director of S.O.K.—Save Our Kids, the anti-drug school campaign at your school. I understand that she overdosed on your pills."

Ms. Dietz sank in her chair, and looked toward the door. Druthers looked at her, and shook his head. The reporter had called him first, and he

had hoped to warn Ms. Dietz before she answered her phone. He motioned Ms. Dietz to end the phone call—and to do it NOW!

"Is this it?" thought Ms. Dietz. "Is my career over?"

Principal Druthers thought to himself, "I should never have even worried about the longevity of Dietz's administrative career. She was bound to back herself into a corner. I could really enjoy this—but I have to be careful not to drag the school into this mess, at least any more than it is already."

Hedgewood Hills, a small quiet community, was nestled in the rolling hills of Virginia. The high school, however, drew 3,000 students from the surrounding county. The football and basketball team won the men's state championship for the past five years. Other than a few complaints about the lack of funding directed toward women's sports, Mr. Druthers felt that his high school was in great shape. Academically, his students ranked well above the state average.

Everything was going well—that is until Ms. Dietz joined his administrative staff. Enough was enough. The pill incident was the final straw.

Phylis Johnson is the case study editor for the *Journal*. She welcomes submissions of cases that deal with communication and relationship issues in schools. Contact her at the Dept. of Radio-Television, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901-6609. 618-536-7555.

Case Study Response:

A Prescription For Bad Public Relations

by Jeannie Killian

The dilemma presented in the case scenario is multiplexed. On one hand, an administrator is acting illegally in her consumption of prescription medications. On the other, there is a public relations/media nightmare cautiously positioned on the thinnest of ice.

In this scenario, the principal is blind-sided by not having the facts.

Ultimately he is accountable for the discipline and actions of his subordinates. Although his administrative partner is not of his personal choice, it is ultimately his responsibility to, first, obey the laws that govern the school, and, second, uphold the integrity of the school he represents at all costs.

Unfortunately, the assistant principal has incriminating information that should ultimately be shared with her supervisor. Her friendship aside, along with the veiled threats from the yet-to-be-accused, the assistant is held to a legal and moral standard as a representative of her school, fellow teachers, school staff and students, the school board, and the community in which she serves.

Although the assistant feels a loyalty to her friend for reasons ranging from pure friendship to repaying favors for position appointment, she must act according to the number one ethical rule: **Do Not Break The Law**. So, first Druthers has to be told the entire situation, including both facts and assump-

tions on the part of the assistant. The principal and the superintendent, with consultation from school legal counsel, need to direct the assistant principal's relations with the media. A public relations statement should be readily available to reporters and other concerned "individuals." Honesty is the best policy.

Yet, since this is a personnel matter, assumptions and facts must be evaluated with the utmost caution and confidentiality. This sentiment should be expressed in the press statement, as well as in any dealings with reporters. Careful wording regarding the district's impending inquiry of the personnel matter is all that is necessary at this point, and this can be expressed without undue suspicion from reporters and the outside community.

The principal, with school legal counsel on hand, also needs to confront the nurse and see if there is indeed a "logical" explanation to be had. If someone is under the addictive effects of drugs (legal or illegal in most states), then the principal has the legal charge to suspend that individual with or without pay to attend treatment. Or the nurse could be fired if a similar offense is mentioned in her contract that was signed upon employment. This does not need to be a media tragedy. The nurse could "voluntarily" remove her services citing "health" reasons and would not need to be terminated. This would murk up the waters for the school, but would only have to be known by a select few. Furthermore, it is doubtful whether her father, Brandon Landon, would be willing to risk his political position in the community to "go public" about this matter. If a voluntary resignation were to be the solution, then it would have to

Case Study: Hedgewood High

be decided upon and put into writing that no future recommendations for employment would be given and that the nurse had voluntarily left and had not been fired. The nurse might possibly qualify for some rehabilitative assistance offered through the applicable state's education association that covers teachers and technical/professional staff.

The principal could seize this whole "mess" as a means of cleaning up his school, by releasing both the nurse and the assistant principal as a willing accomplice. However, the assistant principal was not obliged to share her previously held information on the nurse's actions involving drugs. To do so could easily have resulted in a charge of slander by the nurse. The assistant principal only had rumors and suspicions to relay during her recommendation for employment, and both rumors and unsubstantiated suspicions are illegal if someone is unduly slandered. In hindsight, the assistant principal - a teacher at the time - should never have agreed to write the recommendation letter if she had any reservations regarding her friend's job performance in a school environment. But that is no longer an option for the her.

As a better option, Druthers should address the lack of communication that exists between himself and the assistant. Principal Druthers might also reflect on his own leadership style, and consider whether he might have contributed toward the lack of rapport between himself and the past two women administrators. Nevertheless, the assistant should be cautioned on losing things as sensitive as prescription medications in a school area. The health of the students would be the number one motivation for this discus-

sion. In addition, the principal must address the lack of certain skills on the part of the assistant. Training should be offered first and perhaps a probationary period set.

The principal might find (upon contacting his supervisor and legal counsel) that it would be best to contact the local media himself to underscore his desire to look into the situation cautiously, rather than to merely act upon assumptions and allegations. The sooner that he relays this message to area news broadcasters and other reporters the better.

A formal news conference could serve as the vehicle for such an announcement. "No comment" is not an option. Fictitious rumors fly until they are swatted with fact. The school nurse's advisory role in the Save Our Kids drug awareness program also has the potential for a public relations disaster. The school nurse might be perceived, and perhaps rightly so, as less than the perfect school mentor for substance abuse education. But, the principal should be cautioned from making any rash decisions and should seek legal counsel before announcing any plans for personnel reassignments.

Barring the actions of his staff, the actions of the principal are the foundation on which the matter will be handled—and upon which the school's current image will be evaluated within the community and the media.

Jeannie Killian is an instructor in the Department of Rehabilitation in the College of Education at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

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Cartoons from Alberta, Canada:

We feature in this issue several of Jim Simpson's cartoons. These are featured regularly in the quarterly magazine published by the Alberta Teachers' Association (11010 142 Street, Edmonton, Alberta Canada. T5N2R1).

Jim's character is Ms. Magister, a teacher who has cryptic comments about education generally and the people she encounters.

PHOTO GALLERY: Stacy Edmonds..



*Education is a better safeguard
of liberty than a standing army.*

Edward Everett

Rights, Rights, Rights

20 Communication Rights of An Organization's Employees

by Walter St. John

In the community and the workplace, one should expect that certain behaviors on the part of others are to be expected and required.

Following are suggestions for 20 rights that employees of any organization should be posted and adhered to by supervisors and one's peers in the workplace.

Each employee has the right:

1. To receive a comprehensive orientation about the organization's and department's annual goals, plans and priorities as well as the individual employee's specific job authority, responsibilities, specific performance standards, and results expected.
2. To receive a copy of the Employees' Handbook including an organizational chart, as well as information about channels and procedures for communicating.
3. To receive communications training consistent with organization's expectations and job responsibilities.

A Bill of Rights

For Employees?

For Students?

"We have rights, too," students as well as employees could claim. Here are two statements of rights for readers to circulate within their organizations to stimulate debate.

One has been in our *Journal* files but not published for more than 10 years. The other is courtesy of the *Journal of the Ohio School Boards Assn.* and an article by editor Chris Barton.

Do readers know of statements of student or employee rights that have been adopted or proposed by a national association? We'd like to know of any.

The Editor

4. To be communicated with continuously regarding important matters, rather than only sporadically or in times of crisis.
5. To be communicated with on a right-to-know basis rather than only on a need-to-know basis.
6. To be kept promptly and fully informed on all vital matters affecting one's future career opportunities.
7. To have ready access to one's supervisor and fellow employees to discuss job-related matters.
8. To have all the necessary information when it is needed in order to do the job well (information should be: clear, complete, current, accurate and timely).
9. To receive prompt and honest answers from superiors to questions, suggestions and requests.
10. To be leveled with regarding problems, challenges and achievements of the overall organization.
11. To receive clear and consistent messages that are stated concisely in simple and understandable language.
12. To be communicated with in a "socially" acceptable manner and as a mature adult with dignity as a person.
13. To have bad news (problems) shared candidly as well as good news (achievements).
14. To have all important matters discussed face to face, whenever feasible, to permit asking of clarifying questions and provide an opportunity for direct input or feedback.
15. To receive advance notice about new work requirements as well as reasonable lead time to complete assignments.
16. To have the opportunity to express oneself freely, in an appropriate manner, about all vital matters pertaining to one's job and well-being.
17. To be heard and listened to—especially by one's supervisor—objectively and without prejudice.
18. To have the opportunity to make constructive criticisms, offer suggestions, and suggest ideas freely without recrimination.
19. To have an opportunity to provide input or feedback on all important matters affecting the employee before the decision being made or the action taken.
20. To have confidential information in one's Personnel Record protected and one's confidences honored.

Walter St. John is professor emeritus of Keane College, New Hampshire, and has been a communication consultant and author.

3. Each student has the right to have positive role models (teachers, administrators and board members) who stress achievement and public pride in our school district.

Students Propose an Educational Bill of Rights

Students in a government unit at an Ohio high school were studying our constitution's Bill of Rights, as well as rights of airline passengers and medical care recipients.

A student asked teacher Keith Krane: "Is there a bill of rights for students?" He answered, "No." That launched an initiative that resulted in a 20-item Bill of Rights that was presented to their Tallmadge, Ohio, Board of School Directors early in 2000.

The project involved 45 seniors who drafted some 60 possible rights of students (some also involve the faculty) and narrowed them to 20. Principal Bob Hardesty was at first skeptical about the project but supports their work. More than 190 seniors, along with some staff members, signed a pro-rights petition that was presented to the board and accepted at a meeting in January of 2000.

Educational Bill of Rights

Tallmadge City Schools

In order to foster a positive learning environment, and promote individual student growth, the School Board does

ordain and establish this Educational Bill of Rights:

1. Each student and faculty member has the right to be provided with a safe learning environment (safe from violence, environmental concerns, and structural defects).

2. Each student and faculty member has the right to be provided with facilities conducive to a positive learning atmosphere and comparable to surrounding similar suburban districts.

3. Each student has the right to have positive role models (teachers, administrators and board members) who stress achievement and public pride in our school district.

4. Each student has the right to an education at public expense equal to that of other students in surrounding districts.

5. Each student has the right to professionally trained and certified staff members who stress positive learning programs and atmosphere.

6. Each student has the right to select and take courses deemed necessary for individual needs.

Students were studying our nation's Bill of Rights, and one asked if rights of students were spelled out. A teacher said no, and these 20 student rights statements are the result.

7. Each student has the right to equally participate in extra-curricular activities (clubs and sports).
8. Each student has the right to receive a free lunch at government or school expense if unable to afford one.
9. Each student has the right to receive publicly funded transportation to and from school.
10. Each student has the right to express personal opinions at appropriate times and places.
11. Each student has the right to learn in an environment free from mental, emotional, or physical threats (including sexual harassment).
12. Each student has the right to receive fair and unbiased treatment and should not be subject to discrimination based upon race, sex, color, creed, national origin, language bias, sexual preference, physical attributes and/or mental/physical handicaps.
13. Each student has the right to receive proper "due process" procedures from teachers, administrators, and board members, and the right to petition them for a redress of grievances.
14. Each student has the right to file any complaint of misconduct or inappropriate behavior with the proper officials and receive a prompt reply to the matter.
15. Each student has the right to privacy and confidentiality regarding personal and medical records unless otherwise waived by the student and/or parents.
16. Each student has the right to periodic (minimum quarterly-semester) evaluations regarding his/her academic status in classes.
17. Each student has the right to express one's self in his/her personal dress (clothes and hair style) unless it violates reasonable health or board of education policies.
18. Each student has the right to be accepted for his/her individuality and not to be subject to unnecessary conformist behaviors unrelated to educational goals.
19. Each student has the right to receive updated and appropriate learning material and equipment necessary for a proper education in today's society.
20. Each student has the right to a classroom teacher-student ratio not to exceed 1 to 25.

PHOTO GALLERY: Stacy Edmonds



*An educated person should
know everything about
something and something
about everything.*

C.V. Wedgwood

Flashback to 1949

Tale of A Beginner Teacher—

50 Years Ago

The following is an account of a “new” educator in a one-room school in 1949. At that time, some 86,000 such schools were operated in the United States. The account was written by Jackie Rose and published in the *Grade Teacher* of September 1949.

Beginner's Luck Teaching in a Rural School

by Jackie Rose

TEACHING a rural school is fun—if you can cope with its problems. Perhaps identical twins, twelve-year-olds in the first grade, and hordes of cats that come to school regularly would not be problems for experienced teachers, but they were almost insurmountable obstacles in my beginning teaching career.

I'll have to admit that I was not prepared to teach when I started, but no one could have convinced me of it at the time. After all, I had had 15 days of training in a teachers college, and the State Board of Certification had said that I was capable of teaching school. They proved it by giving me an emergency certificate!

Armed with this emergency certificate, so called because it was issued to provide teachers because of the teacher

shortage, I began my first term fully convinced that I would accomplish great things in the eight months ahead.

My school was supposed to be an ideal one for a beginner. It was in a rural community where there would be no supervisor to correct my mistakes, and I was free to iron them out as I saw fit. There were only eight pupils but I was to discover that a small school like that is far more difficult than one even with large numbers.

My salary was \$105 per month. I was to receive an \$80 bonus if I succeeded in cramming a full nine months' work into the children in eight months, so that school could be dismissed a month early.

The fact that I was to live alone, in a little teacherage on the school ground, was considered a good arrangement. I wouldn't have anything to divert my attention from my school work. It didn't seem to occur to anybody that this was my first time away from home and that I might get homesick. However, I was only seven miles from home and could go home weekends when and if my brother came after me. Long before school was out I discovered that the seven miles weren't too far to walk when the mud piled up and getting a car to the schoolhouse was impossible.

Determined that I would not stay alone I took my dog with me. However, she was too old to be any protection

and was not much company because she slept most of the time. I finally had to take her home and leave her.

All plans that I had made of opening school with a bang were shattered before school started when a heavy rain made traveling impossible. I had the schoolroom all to myself that first day.

Long before school time the next morning all eight children arrived. Before they were in the schoolroom thirty minutes I had enough problems to keep me busy a month. There were twin beginners named Wester and Vester. Neither seemed able to talk, but when I finally convinced them that it was safe for them to open their mouths, they didn't know how old they were or what their father's name was. Their older brother, age eight, was in the second grade but their twelve-year-old sister was going to start over again with the twins! There was a little boy and a girl in the third grade, a girl in the fifth, and another in the seventh grade.

My first big job, as I saw it, was to teach the twins to write their names. With this idea in mind I took the one that I called Vester to the board and started helping him form the letters he would need. After we had written "Vester" over and over, suddenly his older brother dashed up crying, "That's

Wester you've got, Vester is back there in his seat."

I never did convince the twins that they were to sit in the seats assigned to them. I had placed Vester in the front of one row and Wester at the back of another so that I would have some way of telling them apart. Either I had a poor memory or they learned early in life that swapping seats was smart because the boy in the front seat never answered to the same name two days in a row during the whole term.

The older sister had to have a grade by herself, whatever it was called. She felt insulted to be put with the twins and wouldn't work with them. I could hardly blame her. Long before school was out I discovered that she could read her brother's second grade books as well as she could her own. Soon she was reading in the third grade books. The day she took the third grade reader home to show her mother was as big a day for me as it was for her. I, a beginner, had accomplished something five other teachers couldn't do! My pride was destined to have a fall, however, for when school started again the next fall, the new teacher accused me of not having taught the girl a thing!

Lambs may follow little Mary in other schools but here it was sure to be cats. We had big cats, little cats, black

Long before school time the next morning all eight children arrived. Before they were in the schoolroom thirty minutes I had enough problems to keep me busy a month.

Flashback to 1949

cats, gray cats, yellow cats, cats of all kinds and descriptions. The ones too little to follow their owners were carried. One thing I was certain of: All these cats were not going to stay in the schoolhouse. Alas, the creatures got even with me for making such a ruling by climbing to the top branches of the tall cottonwood trees around the playground. As my oldest boy was only eight, I had the job of getting them down. However, I really grew quite fond of them, and before school was out I had joined the throng and had a beautiful black cat of my own.

These children got along beautifully when I was with them, but going home was a different story. Under threat of violence from the mothers I finally had to dismiss them at different times and see that one group was well up the road towards home before I sent the others on.

Another little girl moved into the neighborhood in early spring. She supplied a different situation, as I had to walk most of the way home with her. Someone had killed a skunk beside the road and she refused to pass it alone.

Our school entertainment presented the biggest problems of all. Of course the parents thought I had all of the talent necessary, even though only eight or nine in number, to present a good program. I didn't agree, but since they expected programs, I had to do the impossible.

We had good luck at Christmas time even though the children did not know their parts very well and needed prompting. There were enough babies in the audience so that no one could hear the performers any too well and everyone went home pleased with what their children had done.

Beside the school entertainment

there was little socialization in the community. There were weekly meetings of a farmers' organization at the school house. I was always invited as there was no electricity in the schoolhouse and they had to borrow my kerosene lamp in order to see.

Spring came! The twins and their older brother began to talk about their yearly haircut. It seemed that after all danger of frost was over their father would shave the boys' hair off and allow it to grow out for the next term of school. They said that he didn't dare cut it in the fall for fear they would catch cold. You can imagine how they looked by spring!

At last I could stand the hair in their eyes no longer. I borrowed a pair of barber scissors from a neighbor. Then I took the little boys behind the schoolhouse and cut their hair. I had a good excuse, though! I wanted to take them to a movie, as they had never seen one. They said their father would not let them go to town because their hair looked so bad. So I cut it and sent them home in the evening expecting their father to come back with them to scold me for committing such a daring deed. Great was my relief when he sent word to school the next day that he was glad I had done it! I had saved him the job. We proceeded to town for our movie as planned, and all had a good time.

The end of school was not exactly sad for me. Yet I had enjoyed my little group despite all the handicaps, but I felt that I had served my apprenticeship. I was ready to step out and let some other unsuspecting beginner have my place in furthering the cause of rural education.

PHOTO GALLERY: Michael Siluk...



*The truth invariably arrives
several years after you needed it.*

Mary Kay Blakely
Wake Me When It's Over

Establish a PR Plan for Each School

Guidelines to plan for community relations and marketing for individual schools.

Every successful school district must have not only a district-wide public relations plan, but also a PR plan for every building in the district. These building-level plans will vary greatly, but also will contain many common elements. In the material that follows are suggested plans for an elementary and secondary school PR plan. These should be adapted by principals and staffs to meet their unique needs.

Every school—whether an elementary, middle, junior high or senior high school—has a public relations program. The question is whether this program is planned or just happens.

An elementary building-level PR plan

Many district officials hold a school communication workshop for the entire staff—both professional and support members—to involve them in developing a PR plan for the school year. Such a plan recognizes the many publics with which a school must com-

municate and includes both mass communications and interpersonal communication activities.

Any elementary building-level PR plan should include these 10 points:

1. Staff communication and involvement. A school's own staff is the key to good public relations. Excellence in the classroom must be the first priority, followed by a firm commitment to two-way communication between staff, administration, parents, students, teachers and the community.

2. Parent communication. Many traditional ways of communicating with parents are not working as well as they once did. Try these suggestions:

Parent workshops—not only after school, but before school, in the evening and on Saturdays, and in locations convenient to parents.

Homework hotlines—where parents can call on phone or radio at certain hours in the evening or on weekends to get assistance from teachers on homework problems or other questions.

Reach out. Encourage "good news" calls from teachers to parents as well as those essential calls about concerns.

3. Principal communication. Use

These guidelines were published by the Alaska Department of Education in the late 1980s and were printed in this *Journal* in Vol. 12, No. 1 in 1989.

every opportunity possible to speak to parents and groups explaining the school program and the principal's role in it. Be close to your staff; be visible in the halls, take over a class now and then. Take an active role in the community.

4. Publications. Carefully plan your efforts to communicate with pictures and the printed word. Tell the school story through publications such as: a school handbook, newspaper, program and curriculum guide(s), annual report, school calendar, etc. Develop bilingual materials where needed.

5. Regular school visitation program. Invite parents and non-parents to the school to "see for themselves," and repeat the invitation often. Keep an open-door policy.

6. Establish a speakers' bureau. Have it include both school staff and students. Develop a speech kit with slides about your school. Design a handout telling success stories of present and past students. Prepare a classic program for use on local radio stations.

7. Set up a system of key communicators. Identify those persons in the school area who know what's going on in the community and put them to work on your team.

8. Establish a citizens PR advisory committee. Invite a group of parents, non-parents, neighborhood business leaders, staff and students to serve on a special committee to provide feedback and suggestions about your PR program.

9. Student communication. Students are key communication resources. Build in listening opportunities with students; be visible and valuable. Help students understand their PR role in the district's public confidence building efforts.

10. Know your media. Invite media representatives to the school. Make an appointment to visit them to learn how they would like to receive school news. Discuss ways you can help them get information about your school program and activities.

PR programs for secondary schools

Secondary school principals frequently find the suggestion to develop a building PR plan is an awesome task on top of a schedule that already demands a 70-hour week! The suggestions below have come from secondary principals who have developed successful PR programs.

1. Build on existing programs—those offered by businesses and city groups. If companies in your area or other groups are sponsoring special events, involve the schools in these efforts. It is an opportunity to showcase students and staff, to offer space in the schools for the programs and build the school PR into an already successful program. Alert students, staff and parents to the event and seek ways they can take an active part.

2. Have informal sessions (lunches, coffee) with small groups of staff, students, parents and community residents like business, church, and civic leaders. Consider career parents and schedule some sessions in the evenings, on weekends or "en route" to work in the morning.

3. Provide training in human relations and communication skills for professional and support staff members. Schedule "update meetings" to keep the staff informed about district programs as well as local building activi-

Guidelines for Schools

ties. Help them understand the critical role they play in building public confidence as representatives of the school district in the community.

4. Use every opportunity to get out into the community and speak up for education. Develop "good news" sheets about positive school happenings, awards, student achievements, staff honors, etc. Share these with the community, superintendent, board of education and media.

5. Provide opportunities for staff members to visit feeder schools and discuss programs with staff members there as well as students. Invite staffs and students from these schools to special visitation/orientation sessions at your school. (Don't forget to include parents.)

6. Publish a newsletter and see that it is distributed to staff, parents and community residents—businesses, churches, service clubs and your feeder schools.

7. Invite community service clubs (Lions, Rotary, etc.) and the chamber of commerce to hold meetings on campus—encourage them to invite staff members and students to attend. Suggest programs and/or speakers that could be furnished by staff or students.

8. Provide special workshops and discussion groups for parents. Schedule some on specific topics such as drug abuse, discipline, family problem solving. Hold special sessions for single parents to meet and discuss mutual concerns.

9. Schedule special Senior Citizen or Grandparent Days with tours of the building, class visitation, participation and lunch with students and staff. Invite them to share their talents with the students. Have cards available for them to complete providing you with

information about their areas of interest and willingness to serve as school volunteers.

10. Develop rapport with local media representatives. Provide them with the information they need. Send them tip sheets with story suggestions, and whom they can contact for additional information. (Give school and home phone numbers.)

11. Improve relationships with the business community. Invite representatives to meet with you and staff members to discuss ways they can help. Tell them your needs and ask for their suggestions.

12. Involve your staff, students and parents in a "Pride in Our Schools" campaign.

Year 2000 Update

by the Editor

Why bother to do these things?

• **Try these two:** 1, Put "faces" on taxpayers' dollars at work. 2, Build people-to-people relations throughout the community.

• **Just think:** If and when vouchers are okayed, you better have a solid cadre of parents and citizens who will continue to support public schools.

Connecting with the Community

Try Focus Groups to Find Out What Your Residents Think

Be prepared for an added bonus when you use focus groups—a community dialogue about schools.

by Jeanne Magmer

For many good reasons, school boards need to look beyond their public meetings and telephone calls to find out what their community really thinks about its schools.

Finding out what your community thinks periodically and regularly is important because:

- Demographics change.
- Public opinion is fluid. Communities and their thinking change. School boards and administrators need to keep pace with that change.
- Boards and administrators need information from constituents to make informed decisions.
- When we take time to ask, we tell our publics we are interested in their opinions.

School boards who seek community input, early and often, from a broad cross-section of the community, can make decisions with confidence—confidence that the decisions they make are

in sync with their community's priorities and expectations.

One of the standard ways to seek community input or opinion is to conduct a survey. A survey can be done by mail; but unless 30 percent to 60 percent of those who are surveyed respond, the results are unreliable.

A survey can be done by telephone. But, to be done well, so that results are reliable, a district should seek expert help. The expense of this "expert help" may be more than many small districts can afford.

There is, however, an alternative to surveying that districts of any size, especially small districts, can do effectively and with good results. The alternative is focus groups.

What are focus groups?

Focus groups allow you to talk with a large cross-section of your community in a short time. Unlike the survey, the focus group lets people talk about

School boards who seek community input, early and often, from a broad cross-section of their community, can make decisions with confidence.

what's important to them—not what you think ought to be important.

Such groups often are used by research firms or advertising agencies to gather information that can later be used to develop questionnaires for more formal research methods. Boards can use focus groups to explore people's reactions to school issues or problems.

The organization of focus groups can range from something resembling a "town meeting," to a highly structured, videotaped session commonly used by advertisers for market research.

Focus groups are considered structured "nonprobability sampling," a research method that provides directional rather than quantitative data. Although the responses cannot be statistically validated, as they can be for a survey of a randomly selected sample of an entire community, those who use the process gain a definite sense of direction.

When to use focus groups

School boards use focus groups to assess community thinking on a particular topic or issue, and to determine if there is a pattern to the responses that can give you direction or help you make a decision.

For example, when one school dis-

trict board prepared to hire a new superintendent, board members feared one special-interest group in the community might dominate the public meeting at which the criteria for hiring a superintendent were to be set. To ensure a broader perspective of the community's expectations for its new superintendent, the board conducted eight focus groups. Community residents most affected by the hiring decision were asked what qualities or qualifications the new superintendent should have.

The priority lists the focus groups generated were compiled and used for

Year 2000 Update

by the Editor

When was the last time someone apart from your family asked you for your opinion?

Didn't you feel flattered that someone thought so highly of you that your opinion mattered to them?

That good feeling is a bonus of being involved with a focus group.

discussion at the public meeting. The special-interest group came, but found most of their concern had been addressed and that they had little to add to the selection criteria.

In another school district, eight focus groups were asked to discuss the level of funding the district should have, in what form—tax base or annual levy—to get the district out of the safety net and back on more stable financial ground.

Another school board faced the difficult decision of whether to close one of the district's three schools. A vocal group at board meetings advocated closing a school to save money. A staff report for operating the district in two buildings called for major, costly additions at the two sites.

The board didn't know what the community's concerns were. The issue was too complicated to cover in a telephone survey; the result too important to chance the potentially small response of a mail survey. Focus groups were an alternative the board believed might work. They did.

Eight focus group session involved a total of 65 participants, close to 10% of the district's registered voters. The results gave the board an indication of what the community valued about the schools that needed to be protected. The groups also agreed on a number of questions they wanted answered as part of any board decision.

Using the focus groups' criteria, the board decided to continue operating the district in three buildings. The plans addressed the issues the community had raised and answered the questions asked.

The community supported the decision. Even those who disagreed with the decision thanked the board for

10 tips for focus groups

1. Decide which groups in your community are most representative of the population as a whole.
2. Limit group size to 10 people. More than that won't give everyone the opportunity to talk.
3. Use a comfortable room with a table and chairs. Provide refreshments to help participants relax.
4. Use a neutral party to conduct the sessions—preferably someone with no connection with the district. An impartial moderator, charged with listening and recording all of the discussion verbatim, will encourage participants to speak freely.
5. Limit the length of the focus group to one hour. Limit the number of questions to three or four.
6. Ask what the district does well, then ask what problems the district faces that most need to be addressed. Starting on a positive note keeps problems and the discussion in perspective.
7. Make questions open-ended. Encourage participants to use them as a guide, as a starting point for the discussion. Unexpected and important insights can be gained from a spirited dialogue among the participants.
8. Have participants prioritize their responses so that any pattern in the responses will be evident.
9. Give participants a copy of the focus group report.
10. Use the results. ☞

Focus groups allow you to talk with a large cross-section of your community in a short time. Boards can use focus groups to explore people's reactions to school issues or problems.

allowing them to have their say.

Who should conduct focus groups?

A focus group's success depends on the moderator. The person must be an effective facilitator, able to put people at ease and encourage them to respond without interjecting any bias into the discussion.

Success also depends on the moderator's ability to record comments as close to verbatim as possible. And then the moderator must work with the group to assign priorities for their responses.

The kinds of groups a board chooses to participate will vary from community to community. However, the num-

ber in each group should be limited to 10. And the session should last no more than one hour.

If you need to know what your community thinks, and a survey won't tell you, try focus groups. And be prepared for an added bonus—a community-wide dialogue about schools. You'll find out what's going well and where you have problems. Listen before you decide.

Jeanne Magmer, a past president of the National School Public Relations Association, was public information director of the Oregon School Boards Association. This article is adapted, with permission, from *Focus*, the quarterly journal of OSBA, and was printed in this Journal in Vol. 12, No. 3 in 1989.

Jeanne is now a consultant specializing in school finance elections, and is located at 11319 SW Churchill, Wilsonville, OR 97070.

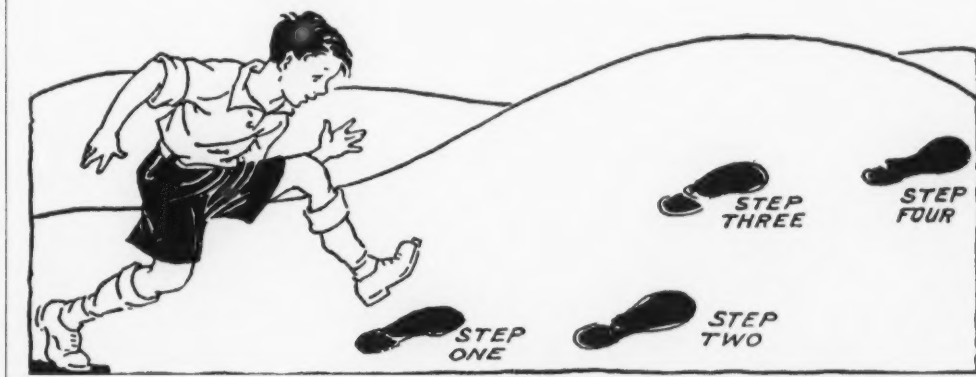


PHOTO GALLERY: David Clohessy.



*The content of the curriculum
should never exclude the realities
of the very students who must
wrestle with it. When students
study all worlds except their
own, they are miseducated.*

Johnnetta B. Cole

Communication Potpourri

Compiled by the editor

Public Schools Receive Scant Credit for Real Accomplishments

by Joseph V. Oravitz

Fact 1: 90 percent of all people in this country are products of the nation's public school system.

Fact 2: Economic growth is a function of a quality educational system.

Fact 3: Over the past 10 years, the American economy has seen unprecedented growth.

Fact 4: Few leaders on any level have seen fit to correlate our brilliant economy with an improved public school system.

Since the release of the *A Nation at Risk* report in 1982, we in the United States have been focused on ways to "improve" the public schools. Volumes of data on school costs, expenditures per pupil, teacher and administrator salaries, construction costs and every other conceivable operations data have been analyzed and reanalyzed by every imaginable source. More recently, as the focus shifted to results, test scores of all kinds—from SAT

to individual subject assessment tests—have been hitting the media almost daily. Report cards for schools have become the favorite story, linking operations data (inputs) to student achievement (outputs) in ways never before tried. These models attempt to follow well-established quality control and cost/benefit analysis methods used for decades by private industry.

Because business and industry leaders have a great interest in the future workforce of this nation—they have taken a keen interest in our education system, particularly the public schools that exist to serve all children. (Approximately 90 percent of all students in this country go through the public school system.)

In my association with state and national business leaders over the past 20 years, I have been besieged with questions related to the public schools, especially about our future workforce and the economy. During the middle 1980s, when our nation's economy was in a slump (or mini-recession) and Japanese markets were booming, comparisons constantly were made linking Japan's educational system to its growing economic status in the world marketplace. Business leaders, fearful of coming up short in the global competitive economy, examined every aspect of the Japanese educational system to justify the relationship between educa-

tion and economic growth. The Japanese economic boom continued from 1982-89 when it suddenly took a nosedive. From 1990 through today, the Asian markets have been in turmoil. The NIKKEI, the

Japanese equivalent of our S & P 500, has fallen some 66 percent during this period and has just begun to rebound.

In contrast, over the past 10 years the American economy has seen unprecedented growth. From 1987-99, the S & P 500 increased a whopping 495 percent. Unemployment is at an all-time low. Business markets are booming. State and federal budgets are accumulating record-setting surpluses due to increased earnings and sales, therefore, more personal and business tax receipts. And the overall economy has never been better.

But, strangely enough, no business or government leader—or newspaper editor—has seen fit to correlate our brilliant economy with an improved public educational system. Yet, since 1982, reform after reform—some mandated by state governments, most voluntarily implemented by local school officials—has been integrated into the public schools.

Still, critics keep beating the drum for more reforms. They continue to act and react as if public schools still are substandard or not up to the challenge of a global economy. Either economic growth is a function of a quality education system (as we were told time and time again by business and government leaders) or it isn't. You can't have it



both ways!

Judging from where we stand as a leading economic force today, let's give credit where it's due!

Joe Oravitz has been executive director of the Penn School Boards Assn. since 1982. His opinion piece was printed in the Association's *Legislative Newsletter* (PSBA, 774 Limekiln Rd., New Cumberland, PA 17070).

The Beauty of Language—Course #101

We received a news release about a new book that has something to do with the *virtue of images*. The writer of the release describes the text as follows:

"These twelve essays meditate on the stunning implications of a global shift toward vision and visionary modalities, apparatus changes, but the basic questions endure...organized around three major themes—the explosion of optical information, the urgency of inventing an imaging interdiscipline and the ethical dilemmas of a technological transparency—these pieces connect a disappearing lens culture to the digital diaphanousness of the twenty-first century...She calls for developing a positive visual praxis on the interpretive ruins of linguistic postmodernism."

The release contains three quotes from authorities in the field. From *Art Times* is this review:

"The author is one of those rare talents that can take difficult concepts and lay them out in clear and concise language for the average (but attentive) mind. Well worth the read."

We were asked if we wanted a copy to review. Based on the language of the publisher's release writer, we decided to pass on this text.

The Editor

Consider these "What Ifs"

Writing in the Texas *Lone-Star* magazine, John McInnis proposes a lengthy series of What-ifs for reflection or to pass along at an otherwise stuffy staff meeting.

Among the What-ifs he suggests are these:

What if the Navy had to hold a bake sale to buy a new nuclear submarine?

What if teachers could censure nasty, obnoxious parents?

What if principals could send incorrigible class disrupters to clown shows?

What if every kid in America had all 64 colors in his/her crayon box?

What if employers actually paid student workers better for making better grades?

What if Congress actually paid 100 percent of its special-education mandates?

What if legislators agreed to risk their political careers for true tax reform?

What if we could actually end this foolish and horrific fascination with guns and violence?

What if teachers got the kind of income that plumbers and accountants get?

What if we had 100 percent board participation in training of real consequence?

What if public education got a fair shake from the media JUST EVERY OTHER DAY?

What if we could stop fussing over the accountability rating of schools and start fussing over children?

What if each of our state legislators



spent a full month teaching eighth grade?

What if driver's licenses were issued for as long as the student passed all classes?

What if our kids' role models used proper and correct English?

What if the smallest, lightest, and slowest had a sport in which they could actually compete?

What if every child had a real mentor outside of the family?

What if adequate funding was more important than politics?

What if we required a designated nice guy to speak at the end of each open forum?

What if kids found it really hard to get enough booze for a binge?

What if we changed "low performing" to "exemplary pending"?

What if we quit wishing for change and started making it?

John McInnis is 1999-2000 president of the Texas Association of School Boards, from whose magazine these What-ifs have been selected. (Subscriptions to the *Lone Star* are \$36 from TASB, P.O. Box 400, Austin TX 78767.)

Lessons from CBS and the Post

CBS, in a report about the most influential people of the 20th Century, had this to say about one President:

Among his accomplishments, President Theodore Roosevelt built the Panama Canal.

President Theodore Roosevelt may have encouraged or pressured the members of the United States Congress to authorize and pay for the construction of the canal, but Theodore

Roosevelt alone did not authorize and cause U.S Funds to pay for it.

Former U.S Representative Bill Paxon (NY), in a profile in the *Washington Post Magazine* of April 12, 1998, is said to have "introduced and passed few bills of any significance" in his 21 years as a legislator (in New York and in Congress).

Representative Paxon did not *not* pass any legislation...he may have *not* introduced bills, but whatever bills he did or did not introduce were acted on by majority vote of the legislative body.

Couldn't the reporter have written that the Representative introduced "few bills that were enacted into law" or that "few of his bills became law?"

A better question for both of these media—where were the editors at CBS and the *Post*, who should have caught these too-obvious short-cuts to proper and clear language?

The Editor

Take a Long, Hard Look at School Vouchers

by Ashlin "Tunney" Williamson

Vouchers. What are they? Who supports them? What are voucher proponents saying in their efforts to divert public funds to private schools?

Actually, there's a two-fold campaign being waged: *for* vouchers and *against* public schools. With either, board members of public schools need to understand the issues and be ready and able to communicate with our communities about the threat vouchers pose to public schools.

Supporters say vouchers will empower parents to choose which school their

Educational Relations Clippings

children will attend and claim that they will force public schools to excel through competition.

Opponents counter that vouchers will undermine public education and democracy, promote elitism, and unwisely use public funds to support religious instruction.

Vouchers must be created either through an act of a state legislature or by voters through a ballot initiative. Their purpose is to provide parents with all or some of the money that would otherwise be available to educate their children in public school and apply it to the cost of enrolling that child in a private school. That would not be done in cash payments to parents, but by the state or resident school district through a transfer of funds to the private school. And who would be eligible? (1) The students who qualify to use the vouchers, and (2) the schools that qualify to receive the money.

Numerous groups support vouchers, each with its own special interest in promoting public funding for private education. They include religious organizations, private school operators, various ideological groups, some business groups, and groups who want to reduce their taxes. Of course, they also include some parents who, for a variety of educational, social or religious reasons, want taxpayer-supported alternatives to public schools. And while these diverse groups can agree that they support vouchers, they probably could not agree on specific strategies to guide the future of education in America.

Where there have been pro-voucher campaigns, they typically operate on the surface by attacking public schools and insisting that vouchers will improve education. Typically, voucher proponents use two reasons for their

stand. (1) They say that most public schools are failing, and (2) They say that vouchers will help the children who use them and provide public schools with the incentive to improve.

Despite all the hype, we all know America's public schools are *not* failing. Some of them *are* struggling, yes. But diverting public funds away from public schools is not going to help the schools or the nation. Contrary to the charges of critics who say America spends far more on education than other nations, U.S. schools are only average in their expenditures. In fact, a 1988 study by the Economic Policy Institute showed that we ranked ninth among 16 industrialized nations in education expenditures. The increase in real costs is tied in large part to such factors as increased services for high-cost special-needs children.

The major purpose of public education is to guarantee that every child has access to a free education at a community school. That happens because our schools are funded by tax dollars. Students cannot be denied admission because of academic performance, ability to pay, race, religion, gender, disability, knowledge of English, or other special needs. Public schools define and advance a nation committed to the basic principles of equity, fairness, and opportunity for all. Board members have an obligation to keep that firmly in mind.

"Tunney" Williamson is past president of the Arkansas School Boards Association. His article appeared in a recent copy of the *ASBA Reporter* newsletter (published at 808 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, Little Rock AR 77202).

PHOTO GALLERY: Michael Siluk...



I firmly believe that kids don't want your understanding. They want your trust, your compassion, your blinding love and your car keys. If you try to understand them, you're in trouble.

Erma Bombeck

Book Reviews

Edited by Art Steller

Books for review and requests to serve as guest book reviewer (single or a group of books) can be sent to editor Arthur W. Steller, Superintendent, Kingston City Schools, 60 Crown St., Kingston, NY 12401

Victory in Our Schools

By John Stanford

Bantam Books, New York, NY; 1999

The story of the Seattle Public Schools and retired U.S. Army Major Gen. John Stanford, who became that city's superintendent, is worth telling repeatedly. Hiring an ex-military person as the top educator for a school system seems a radical approach, which in this case appears to have revitalized education in this city.

Three years after his appointment as Seattle's new superintendent, test scores were up, dropouts were down and violence had declined. Such results have occurred in other cities and many schools without such fanfare. Why is this situation different? The answer is that employee morale and public support were also up. Herein lies the difference between what many traditionally oriented school administrators have accomplished and what Stanford created when both test scores and morale improved. He generated positive emotions and spirit among "the troops" while giving hope and optimism to those on the sidelines.

A favorite saying of this ex-Army general was "You have to love 'em and

lead 'em." The sentiment of love does not mesh with the typical military image, however. Stanford moved beyond the mold into a field that welcomed his message. Educators embraced his caring attitude which buffered his demands for accountability.

As the Seattle educators focused on academic achievement, scores went up. The vision became commonly accepted as results reinforced resolve. Schools were transformed into organizations emphasizing achievement and people were made accountable.

Experienced school administrators will recognize the methods and techniques used in Seattle's improvement programs, little really new here. What is unique is the blending of strong structural educational planning and implementation with passion, inspiration, empowerment, self-esteem and pride. Another distinction is the mystique sparked by the leader—John Stanford. His death from leukemia has transformed his dedication into a legacy of inspiration, making him an icon for American education.

The Disciplined Mind: What All Students Should Understand

By Howard Gardner

Simon and Schuster, New York, NY; 1999

Howard Gardner, widely regarded among educators for his profound theory of multiple intelligences, has written *The Disciplined Mind* for both himself and a broad audience beyond educators. He wants to shift the public



conversation away from the current array of reforms towards a discussion of the content of education, including how it is presented and learned. While he admits to personal preferences throughout this book, his declared mission is an educated citizenry that understands the meaning of truth, beauty and goodness.

To gain a legitimate perspective of these three curricular elements, their corresponding undersides—falseness, ugliness and evil—must also be studied. The author's personal interests are proposed as illustrative topics for educational programming; he believes that everyone should comprehend Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, the music of Mozart, and the Holocaust.

Gardner's uncluttered perspective offers an alternative to the standardized test-driven program advocated by so many politicians. Rigorous attention to academic disciplines, however, is recommended with most interdisciplinary instruction postponed until the latter years of high school or college.

Currently, there are thousands of bridges from theory to practice. Gardner acknowledges that a monopoly based solely on his opinions is not workable. Therefore, he proposes six viable pathways from theory to practice for reaching a better educated populace.

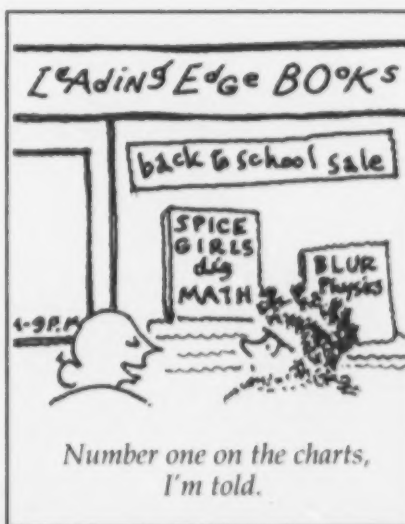
Intimate Journalism: The Art and Craft of Reporting Everyday Life

By Walt Harrington

Sage Publications, Inc., 2455 Teller Rd., Thousand Oaks, CA 91320; 1997

Journalists cover the crisis, the scandal, the elections, the storm, the celebrity, and thousands of similar newsworthy happenings. The every day

Mr. Magister



"The journalism of everyday life is a way to repair the torn social fabric that journalism has undeniably helped to shred. It's a journalism that's needed today as much as reporting on greed, corruption and social injustice was needed at the turn of the century, perhaps more."

—Walt Harrington

aspects of our lives are often left to the creative writers of fiction. Feelings of normal people are ignored in the fast-paced, hard news orientation of the news media. Not everyone agrees that this approach should be the only way for journalism to function.

"Intimate journalism is meant as a corrective—as both a call for change and a how-to manual." According to the author: "It's long past time to ask, in an era defined by shallow celebrity reporting in magazines, whether readers demand that kind of journalism or if it is all that many magazine journalists are capable of providing. It's long past time to ask American newspaper editors and reporters to rethink what they consider 'news'."

Educational communicators know that negative news drives out positive results and conflict sells over cooperation when it comes to the news media. Here is a writer claiming that a turnaround is necessary for newspapers to survive. He goes on to plead: "The journalism of everyday life is a way to repair the torn social fabric that journalism has undeniably helped to shred. It's a journalism that's needed today as much as reporting on greed, corruption and social injustice was needed at the turn of the century, perhaps more."

Harrington has compiled an anthology of articles for students and professionals. These stories uncover the emo-

tional aspects of the people living them. Readers can relate to the individuals and learn from them, just as professional writers can learn how to draft such compelling features.

The implications for education are profound, because journalism has never covered this field well. The drama of everyday life in the classroom has not been considered news.

Building Wealth: The New Rules for Individuals, Companies and Nations in a Knowledge-based Economy

By Lester Thurow

Harper Collins Pub., Inc., 10 East 53rd St., New York, NY 10023; 1997

The key words in this book's title are "Knowledge-based Economy."

"Despite having invented compulsory universal public education, Americans are slowly withdrawing from the system that created their own success."

The above quotation will resonate with educators. Will business leaders, politicians and others respond to the alarm, even if sounded by one of the world's most recognized economists, Lester Thurow of MIT? Unfortunately,

the answer is probably not.

The author then states distressing facts about the status of American public education ranging from test scores plunging to low teacher pay.

"If the facts are clear and America doesn't act to change those facts, then the reasons for its inaction are the most interesting part of the situation. The inability to change lies at the heart of failure. The future will be different from the past, what was done in the past won't work in the future, yet they system won't change. The American school system has to change, yet it cannot."

Will educators or parents overcome their collective inertia and launch massive and continuous programs to revamp education? It seems unlikely.

Thurrow concludes:

The opponents of change are well known. But there is no reason to believe that their opposition is particularly powerful politically. Their power comes not from the strength of their political position, but from the political impotence of the forces advocating change. They care, but not enough to overcome the vested interests.

America's lack of action stems from the fact that American education is neither good nor bad; it is both simultaneously. Where it is good, it is very, very good. This reality stops Americans from acting to change the system where it is bad.

Can't this condition of stagnation be changed? According to Thurrow, "Democracies respond to public demands." However, the percentage of eligible voters who exercise their voting rights regularly declines.

Maintaining the current and future vitality of our economy depends upon

an educated populace, who vote for improvements in public schools so that the future members of society will have competent job skills and be smart enough to retain an educational system which has brought us success. Thus, we have a circle of cause and effect.

The epilogue is more uplifting. Thurrow reaches back in history to remind us that great men and women are builders who transform the physical and/or intellectual environment. The task is clear. The question is will we confront the problems and change the system?

Mr. Magister



*This is perhaps
the most connected class
I've had in years.*



School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action

By Joyce Epstein, et al

Corwin Press, Inc., 2455 Teller Rd.,
Thousand Oaks, CA 91320; 1997

Joyce Epstein, the main author, is a name synonymous with parental involvement in schools. While she has published numerous articles, she is also well known for her own involvement with schools in helping to build partnerships. This book is crammed full of activities and programs she has field-tested for over 12 years.

Readers who want to foster satisfying school partnerships will find the strategies, checklists, overheads, flyers, etc. sufficiently detailed to do the job. This step-by-step approach requires discipline—more than many people can muster for an extended period of time. On the other hand, you could cut back the particulars and supply your own creativity.

This handbook is based upon what will work in different communities; there is planned flexibility within the answers that the participants give throughout the various discussions and surveys. The essence of this approach is that people working together should tailor these programs to address their own unique needs.

Everyone connected to schools can benefit from this handbook, although professional volunteer/parental coordinators or public relations directors will have the background and tenacity to complete the program.

13 Proven Ways to Get Your Message Across

By Ernest Brewer

Corwin Press, Inc. 1997

The author, a professor at the University of Tennessee, has described 13 techniques which are useful in giving presentations or conducting teaching. He recognizes that the instructor or speaker must determine the particular method most effective in each circumstance. This collection can form a background to the techniques readers may already be using, or stimulate trainers to expand their versatility.

Each of the following methods has its own chapter: lecture, small group discussion, role-playing, case study, demonstration, panel, inquiry method, buzz groups, programmed instruction, directed study, experimentation, brainstorming and questioning. All sections have definition(s), introductions, procedural steps for usage, variations, appropriate uses with suggestions, advantages/disadvantages/limitations,

examples, a summary and references.

Written in a basic outline format, this 120-page book is simple to follow and apply.

The Complete Advertising and Marketing Handbook

By Herschell Lewis

Bonus Books, Inc., 160 E. Illinois St., Chicago, IL 60611; 1998

Advertising has a mystique about it. Creative ads may win awards, but may not improve sales. Ads may generate many responses from the audience, but result in few sales. This book goes beyond image to suggest advertising tactics that work.

According to the author, the effectiveness of a communication message can be improved by following three basic criterion: "The Clarity Commandment: When you choose words and phrases for force, clarity is paramount. The Rule of Negative Subtlety: The effectiveness of your message decreases in direct ratio to an increase in subtlety. The Concept of Reader Dominance: The writer's knowledge of colorful words and phrases is inconsequential. What matters is whether the reader knows them."

There's little philosophy or theory in this book; it's 99 percent comprised of practical techniques. The detail is captivating, such as which word to use in particular situations or when and where to add a comma. Lewis' volume is almost pure application.

Data Smog: Surviving the Information Glut

By David Shenk

Harper Collins, Pub., Inc., 10 East 53rd St., New York, NY 10023; 1997

The marvelous acceleration of new communications technology and the plentifulness of information has positive benefits. This abundance is generally a welcome condition for most people. Nevertheless, "When it comes to information, it turns out that one can have too much of a good thing. At a certain level of input, the law of diminishing returns takes effect; the glut of information no longer adds to our quality of life, but instead, begins to cultivate stress, confusion and even

Mr. Magister



ignorance. Information overload threatens our ability to educate ourselves, and leaves us more vulnerable as consumers and less cohesive as a society."

Media scholar Shenk, drawing upon his own personal experiences, as well as other scholarly and commercial views, has compiled a most significant argument. The rosy myths about the perfections of the Information Age are shattered. The negative effects upon our bodies, relationships, emotional stability, minds and public policies are cited. The fact that even convincing the public to *receive* a message is now much more difficult than ever is only one example.

The views of the author lead to some interesting subtleties and paradoxes. To make some sense out of the confusion, he has constructed the following:

The Laws of Data Smog

- Information, once rare and cherished like caviar, is now plentiful and taken for granted like potatoes.
- Silicon circuits evolve much more quickly than human genes.
- Computers are neither human or humane.
- Putting a computer in every classroom is like putting an electric power plant in every home.
- What they sell is not information technology, but information anxiety.
- Too many experts spoil the clarity.
- All high-stim roads lead to Times Square.
- Birds of a feather flock virtually together.
- The electronic town hall allows for speedy communication and bad decision-making.
- Equifax is watching.

- Beware stories that dissolve all complexity.
- On the information highway, most roads bypass journalist.
- Cyberspace is Republican.

There are various antidotes to Data Smog including "Be Your Own Filter" (cut down on messages), "Simplify," "De-Nichify" (add diversity), and "Don't Forsake Government; Help Improve It." These items were appealing to this reviewer. On the public relations side, the editing and advertising are most relevant.

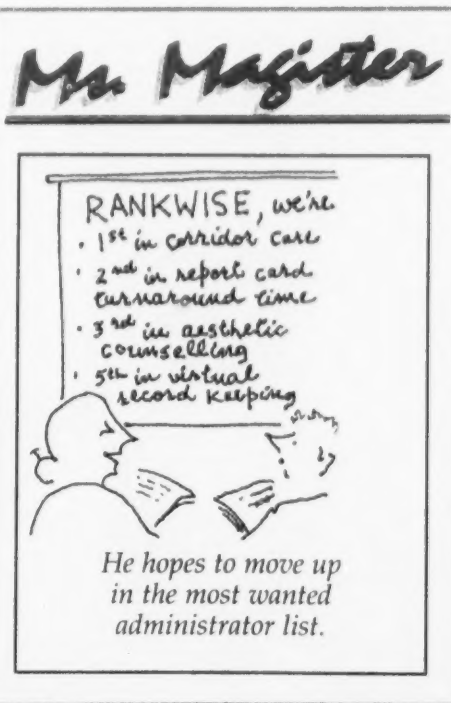


PHOTO GALLERY: Michael Siluk.....



*The world seems to be divided
into two groups of people; those
who say that you never get
something for nothing, and those
happy creatures who maintain
that the best things in life
are free.*

Janet Gillespie

Photo Credits

Addresses for photographers whose work we are using in this *Journal* issue:

Michael Siluk lives and works from Blain, Minnesota (2872 89th Lane N.E., 55449). His phone number is 612-636-5843, and he is available for assignments.

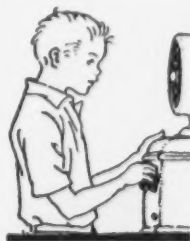
Robert Finken is a freelance photographer based in Richmond, Virginia (11016 Ashburn Rd., 23235). Call him at 804-320-1489 for special assignments.

Geri Kody can be contacted at Clark County Schools, 4212 Eucalyptus Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89121; 702-799-5442.

Stacy Edmonds can be contacted at 725 Falcon Dr., Wyndmoor, PA 19038; 215-576-6551.

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They can supply a variety of photos for review and publication on a one-time basis for fees to be arranged depending on the nature of the use.



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Guidelines for Submission

Relations—The Journal of Educational Relations

A refereed journal--scholarly articles by academic/higher education authorities are refereed by an international editorial review board. The *Journal* also accepts articles by practitioners and administrators in basic (K-12) education and journalists at large.

Scope

Articles are sought on topics such as internal communication and climate, employee motivation, parent involvement, partnerships, working with the news media, community participation, audits, surveying and polls, community service programs for students, communication training, advisory committees, volunteers, writing and speaking, publications, alumni associations, foundations, mentoring, photography, and related topics.

The overall goal of the *Journal* is to support efforts to enhance/foster student achievement and staff productivity, and to provide information to build public knowledge of the value and potential benefits of a sound basic education of our youth. We advocate the concept that the school public relations function must be based on fact and reality as compared to ideals and goals of educators and the community at large.

Style

Scholarly articles can be prepared following style of the publication *Kappan*, with these exceptions:

Before the start of the article, include a summary of the scope and major findings of

the article in one paragraph.

We encourage you to include photographs, drawings, and tables as appropriate.

Submissions

- Submit five copies of a manuscript with a letter from the author(s).
- Articles should be 1,000 to 3,500 words in length.
- Include an abstract of the article and a two-three sentence credit for each author on a separate listing.
- Advise if the article has been published or is being considered elsewhere.
- Queries for articles on specific topics are welcomed.
- SASE. Include a #10 self-addressed, stamped envelope for acknowledgement of receipt of your article. Include a 9" x 12" similar envelope for reply to submissions or queries.
- When an article is accepted, we will ask that a copy be sent, as the main message, to our e-mail at aholliday@earthlink.net.
- Response to an article or a query is usually conveyed to an author within 60 days.

Address manuscripts and correspondence to Albert E. Holliday, Editor and Publisher, *Journal of Educational Relations*, P.O. Box 657, Camp Hill, PA 17001-0657. 717-761-6620.

Previous *Journals* are available in microfilm from University Microfilm Int., 300 Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Refer to *Journal of Educational Communications* (1975-83), *Journal of Educational Public Relations* (1984-95) and *Journal of Educational Relations* (1995-).

The Ten Commandments of Excellent School Public Relations

by Thomas E. Robinson

- 1.** Thou shalt judge all actions and decisions on the basis of how they will profit the common good, not how they will profit special-interest groups.
- 2.** Thou shalt always seek, and attempt to remedy, the causes of adverse consequences.
- 3.** Thou shalt strive in every school to bind together students of a variety of backgrounds into an integrated, friendly, interdependent community.
- 4.** Thou must, as the first essential step in improving the image of education, stress the merited improvement of the image of the educator.
- 5.** Thou must open schools and classrooms in every way possible to encourage parents and citizens to observe the quality services they support.
- 6.** Thou shalt, in every school publication and report, by careful supervision, ensure the absence of spelling, grammatical, and language errors.
- 7.** Thou shalt, as a member of the teaching profession, consider yourself always in every respect to be an appropriate model for student imitation and emulation.
- 8.** Thou must make certain that the promise of education becomes the reality of education.
- 9.** Thou, as a member of a school staff, must be a member of a united school community, all imbued with the same institutional mission, the same institutional objectives, and the same institutional identity.
- 10.** Thou shalt, serving in a public secular institution, observe the constitutional separation of church and state, and yet in every act and teaching technique thou shalt advance such values as honesty, honor, compassion, friendliness, truthfulness, reliability, kindness, character, and human relations.

Thomas E. Robinson was president of Glassboro State College, New Jersey, and first book review editor for this *Journal*.